# TROLLOPE'S WIDOWS: BEYOND THE STEREOTYPES OF MAIDEN AND WIFE

By

JOHN DORRANCE KENNEDY

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To Ann

and also

To Alice, Helen, and Ada

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John Dorrance Kennedy

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The widow is a recurrent character type in the novels of Anthony Trollope. Widows are major characters in many of the forty-seven novels. Ordinarily Trollope tends to repeat and to endorse the conventionally-approved patterns of behavior that governed the values of women who expected to marry or who were already married. He approves or disapproves of maidens and wives in his fiction according to their belief in or adherence to the standard female role of wife. However, widows stand outside the nineteenth-century social code that glorified marriage and advocated female submission to the husband. In dealing with widows and widowhood, Trollope is able to examine honestly and thoroughly the social and emotional problems of a mature woman living outside male control, without disturbing his own or his readers' sense of the proprieties. Trollope's awareness of widows is singular among major nineteenth-century novelists and leads him to conclude that the widows' apparent freedom is an illusion. Virtually all of his

widows are defeated socially and emotionally by their widowhood and by their sex.

This dissertation studies every major widow in the novels, together with others more minor; these widows demonstrate the evolution of Trollope's perception and artistry. His awareness of widows developed chronologically. The earliest widows (1847-58) are little more than background characters; their successors (1859-61) are prominently displayed but incompletely explored. With the next group of widows (1862-64) Trollope begins to show closely-examined widows in ordinary life. His most sophisticated widows (1864-71) possess money and/or strong obsessions. Trollope's last widows (1873-82) do not develop beyond his earlier revelations.

The dissertation is organized chronologically. The Introduction provides a synopsis of existing Trollope criticism. Chapter I surveys the status of middle-class English women in the nineteenth century. Chapter II covers the widows of 1847-58; Chapter III explores those of 1859-61. The widows of 1862-64 are examined in Chapter IV and the widows of 1864-71 are seen in Chapter V. Chapter VI is concerned with the widows of 1873-82. The Conclusion contains the findings of this study.

# INTRODUCTION

Modern critics have generally agreed that Anthony Trollope is a major nineteenth-century novelist, and that his special excellence lies in the creation of character. But these two assumptions have not been universally acknowledged in the past. Trollope's present high stature is partially due to changes in critical and social values. Even during the time of his greatest popularity (c. 1857-1870) Trollope was heavily attacked by contemporary critics for reasons that seem groundless today. Novels were then expected to be idealistic and to contain moral preachments, together with characters of unalloyed vice or virtue; Trollope's rejection of the heroic and his penchant for "mixed" characters violated this requirement. Novels were simultaneously expected to be realistic, but some social topics were unacceptable, and lower-class characters could be treated only humorously or with contempt; Trollope likewise violated these restrictions on realism.[1] What contemporary readers, and many critics, liked in Trollope was the authenticity with which he rendered ordinary middle-class characters and the typical crises of their daily lives.

Trollope established himself as a writer from whom best-sellers might be expected with the publication of his fifth novel, Barchester Towers, in 1857. The critical and popular success of the Barsetshire series of novels may be explained, perhaps, by their fine balance between idealism and realism.[2] Trollope received much serious critical attention from 1857 until about 1870, when the critics ceased automatic notice of his new novels.[3] Trollope was, by then, a familiar commodity whose virtues and failings had been clearly tagged by the critics. However, Trollope still retained a wide audience of readers and continued to write until the year of his death, 1882. His critical reputation underwent great fluctuations during his lifetime and has continued to do so. There have been three revivals of critical interest in Trollope: in the 1920s, during the 1940s and 1950s, and in the first years of the 1970s.

The critical nadir: 1870-1919. For many years after his death, Trollope had virtually no critical standing as a novelist. The process of critical denigration had actually begun long before Trollope died; his familiarity to the critics was only one aspect undermining Trollope. Perhaps more important was the general critical reaction in the final quarter of the nineteenth century against the earlier established literary idols. Trollope offered a particularly

broad target for attack, although he was not the only novelist to suffer a negative re-appraisal. Objections to Trollope fell into four related general categories: first, his novels had no intellectual content and were, thus, devoid of substance; second, his novels displayed an uncritical acceptance of the social status quo; third, Trollope himself was a Philistine with a tawdry commercial mind; and, fourth, Trollope was not basically an artist, for his novels had numerous technical defects. In addition, he wrote far too many novels to have done any of them very well. Given the wide acceptance of these ideas, Trollope emerged with a composite negative image. He was seen as the complacent chronicler of the society of his day; the words "mirror" and "photographer" were widely used to describe what was conceived to be his essentially passive and non-creative function. The society he depicted was dead and gone: Trollope could no longer have any value. The posthumous publication of his Autobiography (1883) confirmed existing beliefs; in it, Trollope appears as a self-declared tradesman haggling over money with publishers and as a writer with incredibly mechanical working habits (those infamous two hundred and fifty words every quarter hour for three hours before breakfast every day).[4]

New, more aesthetic assumptions about what a novel should be also colored negative attitudes towards Trollope. Not only did Trollope plod with his commonplaces through

three interminable volumes, but he also committed the unforgiveable sin of authorial intrusion. The artistically self-conscious, intellectual novels of Meredith, Hardy, and James were more modern and preferred by the new critical taste. Moreover, Trollope had simply written too much: forty-seven novels, five volumes of short stories, four travel books, three biographies, and much miscellaneous material. So massive an output could not be the work of anyone who had claim to serious consideration as an artist. Only the six Barsetshire novels and a few other early novels were thought salvageable from the artistic disaster that was Anthony Trollope.

Trollope had many detractors and few defenders in the thirty-seven years after his death. The most substantial favorable opinion during all that time was delivered by Henry James in a valedictory essay published in 1883. James said of Trollope that "His great, his inestimable merit was a complete appreciation of the usual."[5] James referred to Trollope's awareness of the fabric of ordinary life and his ability to dramatize this. For the reader, Trollope gratifies "the taste for emotions of recognition."[6] While James found clear limitations in Trollope, especially the grievous flaw of authorial intrusion, he pointed out that the substance of Trollope's attractiveness is "his extreme interest in character."[7] To James, this was Trollope's most outstanding quality and one that largely compensated

for his faults. James also predicted that Trollope's novels would be read in the future.

Few critics echoed James's positive comments on Trollope. So completely outside critical respectability was Trollope that the author of a survey of earlier Victorian literature written a dozen years after his death felt compelled to apologize for including Trollope at all.[8] Despite prevailing critical contempt, a constant minority of ordinary readers apparently continued to enjoy Trollope. They read the Barsetshire novels as nostalgic light-reading and regarded the characters nearly as friends.[9] During this period of Trollope's deepest disgrace, T. H. S. Escott's memoir was the first full book published about Trollope (1913).

The first revival: the Twenties. The earliest inkling of a revival of critical interest in Trollope became evident in 1920. In that year, Oliver Elton and George Saintsbury separately gave qualified approval to consideration of Trollope as a serious writer.[10] Trollope's real strength, a quality redeeming his many faults, was seen to be his ability at characterization.[11] The most important scholarly book ever written about Trollope was published in 1927. This was Michael Sadleir's landmark work, Trollope: A Commentary, which firmly rehabilitated Trollope's reputation. All modern scholarship rests upon Sadleir and no subsequent

study has completely dislodged it as the definitive work on Trollope. Sadleir believed that characterization and dialogue are Trollope's strongest points. But Sadleir's most valuable contribution was to look beyond the Barsetshire novels to discover that Trollope was a serious social critic and that the later novels, hitherto discounted and neglected, were substantial and admirable. Hugh Walpole published a book on Trollope the year after Sadleir. While favorably disposed toward Trollope, Walpole perceived his major deficiency as a lack of poetry and universality. Walpole thus touched upon a sensitive point that nearly all of Trollope's most fervent critical partisans have been forced to concede. The consensus has usually been that Trollope is unable to depict whatever is most exalted or debased in human emotions, that the uppermost and lowest registers of human experience are outside his range.

Not everyone, however, was dismayed by Trollope's limited emotional scope. Writers of "appreciations" valued other qualities in Trollope. "Appreciations" (my own term) were subjective, impressionistic essays written with great charm and sympathy usually--but not always--by laymen. Such essays invariably regarded Trollope almost with antiquarian interest as a source of genial and genteel nostalgia; inevitably, Barsetshire alone was the topic. These essays lacked any kind of substantial critical weight or any effort

to validate Trollope's right to consideration as a serious novelist. Despite increased scholarly interest, published comment on Trollope was dominated by "appreciations" until after World War II. Later publication of further scholarly work on Trollope has not caused "appreciations" entirely to disappear.

The second revival: the Forties and Fifties. Critical attention to Trollope lapsed at the end of the Twenties; only one scholarly examination of Trollope seems to have been published in the next decade.[12] A second, more productive, Trollope revival began during World War II and lasted until about the end of the 1950s. It was noticed during the war that English servicemen were taking Trollope novels with them on active duty.[13] Trollope's appeal seemed to consist basically of an escapist nostalgia for the more secure values of a supposedly more stable era. Readers were also weary (so it was said) with Jamesian intellectual fiction and longed for more solid, straightforward story-telling.[14] The new Trollope readers were attracted to the Barsetshire novels; they read these not as realistic studies, but as romances.[15]

The critics were brought to look at Trollope again because of reader interest. This second critical revival was broader than the first, and produced more articles and books that substantiated and enlarged upon the ideas of

Sadleir and James. Trollope's lack of intellectuality now became a refreshing freedom from ideological bias. But a close investigation of the later novels caused some critics to discover that Trollope did have ideas, mostly quietly non-ideological, astringent criticism of his society. Generally, the new realization of Trollope's social criticism brought scholars to take a thematic approach to his work.

Four books on Trollope appeared during the Fifties.[16] Trollope also received considerable attention as a significant figure in other books devoted to the exploration of broad literary themes.[17] But interest in Trollope waned by the end of the decade, as the flow of books and articles tapered off. The end of the second Trollope revival was signaled in 1959 by the abandonment of the Oxford Illustrated Trollope, an attempt at a collected edition which had begun in 1948 and had published nine titles. There is presently no standard edition of Trollope.

The third revival: the Seventies. Critics did not entirely desert Trollope in the Sixties. While the articles and books were fewer, the claims these made for Trollope tended to magnify his stature. Although Trollope has usually been condemned for clumsiness, one critic found him to be an underrated novelist-technician,[18] while another scholar (following earlier leads) elevated Trollope to the level of a profound thinker.[19]

The third revival of critical attention to Trollope began in the early 1970s but seems already to have subsided. Three books about Trollope were published in 1971 and 1972;[20] a previously unpublished Trollope manuscript also appeared in 1972.[21]

As the centenary of his death approaches, Trollope's reputation as a major Victorian novelist seems solidly established. Only Dickens and Thackeray are, by common agreement, acknowledged to be his superiors. While Henry James's perception has been affirmed, less generous late-Victorian critics could hardly have guessed that so universally despised a novelist would, one day, be hailed as an acute social critic and as an accomplished, artful writer.

Trollope criticism and Trollope characters. Modern Trollope criticism is remarkable for its relative paucity. There are no more then eleven books devoted exclusively to Trollope and, of these, perhaps five can be regarded as at all adequate. Otherwise, a chapter on Trollope often appears in a book concerned with the exploration of a particular literary theme or with the development of a historical overview. Stray chapters, such as these, while sometimes informative are often hurried and superficial. "Appreciations" are not uncommon, but scholarly articles are more rare: possibly two or three dozen in all and, of these,

only about half have any substance. Certainly, at present, a great deal about Trollope's work and methods remains unexamined.

Critics have generally conceded that Trollope's most considerable achievement as a novelist was the creation of plausible and vital characters. Yet Trollope critics have scarcely looked into the characters and seem, instead, to have preferred exploration of Trollopian themes. What little has been written about Trollope characters has usually fallen into two patterns. Individual characters have occasionally been the subject of articles or briefly mentioned in broad assessments of Trollope; character types have also been recognized, chiefly occupational castes (clergymen, lawyers, doctors) or standard romantic fixtures (spirited young women, feckless young men).

The widow as a recurrent character type. The neglected area of Trollope's characters is too large a subject for a dissertation. Thus, I will limit my study to an examination of a recurrent character type in Trollope's novels: the widow. The novels contain approximately sixty widows, and only eleven novels lack widows.[22] Many Trollope widows are important characters in the novels in which they appear. As widows, their difficulties are clearly distinct from those of other female characters. Trollope seems to be the only major Victorian novelist to scrutinize, at careful

close range, widows and their situation. His use of the widow as a device enlarged his psychological perspective in social criticism and also helped free him as an artist. Typically, the novels of the time all but require concentration upon a courtship story of young lovers that concluded with a figurative peal of wedding bells. Trollope's interest in widows enabled him to go beyond his usual young-love story to examine the emotional and social problems of a mature woman living independent of male control. His use of the widow permitted Trollope to demonstrate tacitly the inaccuracy of conventional beliefs about women's role and to portray the consequent pressures on family life. During the nineteenth century a woman was thought to find fulfillment and happiness in roles of service to her family--as daughter, sister, wife, mother. Trollope shows that these roles are not permanent, and that the passing of the most important, that of wife, leaves a woman unprepared to find meaning or self-identity. Trollope's conclusions are hardly cheering: in whatever they attempt, his widows are almost invariably defeated by social convention, by the pressure of their children, by their own emotional problems, or by a combination of these.

Widow stereotypes and Trollope's widows. A widow has traditionally borne an unfavorable image, either that of a poverty-stricken unfortunate (the "good" widow) or of a

sensual temptress (the "bad" widow). Both stereotypes can be seen in the Old Testament and the New Testament.[23] The standard social response to a widow could be either pitying condescension or frightened hostility. The Renaissance commonplace held a widow to be lusty and rich.[24] The notorious Elizabethan widow, who remarried within weeks of her husband's death, was perceived as confirming the Renaissance cliché. This humorous but essentially hostile view is seen in Jacobean comedy, in which the "widow-hunt" motif is a stock comic situation: suitors attempt to woo and marry a lusty widow for her money.[25] The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries made life difficult for widows in the upper classes. A widow was ideally supposed to remain unwed, in memory of her husband. Yet if she lived alone for long, her reputation could easily suffer; moreover, she needed a man--a husband--to safeguard her property. When she succumbed to these social and economic pressures and remarried, she was then likely to be derided as having done so solely to satisfy her lust.[26]

The stereotypes of the good widow and the bad widow have faded considerably, but feelings today about the remarriage of widows still persist from older times: that young widows should remarry and that older widows would be unwise to do so. Modern sociologists and psychologists seem to have paid remarkably little attention to widows and

widowhood. Standard textbooks on marriage and the family generally ignore the subject or (rarely) bestow a very cursory notice. There are, of course, numerous self-help books directed to widows, but these are aimed at helping their readers deal with bereavement and loneliness. Only two scholarly books, written by sociologists, appear to be exclusively devoted to the study of widows and widowhood.[27]

Trollope's widows are generally within the tradition of the poor widow existing in precarious circumstances. Few are elderly by today's standards, being possibly in their forties or early fifties.[28] This should be considered against a lower life-expectancy in the nineteenth century, and numerous January-May marriages. For most, remarriage is not a realistic expectation though, for several well-dowered younger widows, this is not an unreasonable prospect. However well-off these younger Trollope widows may be, lustiness is not one of their motives for remarriage; sex and marriage have scarcely a perceptible connection in a mid-Victorian novel.

Trollope's widows, their problems and their options, can be understood only within the context of the status of women in the nineteenth century. Chapter I surveys the various facets of the "woman question."

## Notes

[1]David Skilton, Anthony Trollope and His Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of mid-Victorian Fiction (London: Longman, 1972), Chapters 3 and 4.

[2]Skilton, p. 85.

[3]Michael Sadleir, Trollope: A Commentary (1927; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 312.

[4]Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 234-35.

[5]"Anthony Trollope," in The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel by Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 90.

[6]Henry James, p. 113.

[7]Henry James, p. 93.

[8]Frederick Harrison, Studies in Early Victorian Literature (1895; rpt. London: Edward Arnold, 1910), p. 183.

[9]Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (1909; rpt. New York: Holt, 1932), Chapter 11.

[10]Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature 1780-1880 (1920; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1927), Vol. IV. George Saintsbury, "Trollope Revisited," in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, coll. A. C. Bradley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), Vol. VI.

[11]Saintsbury, p. 65.

[12]David Cecil, Victorian Novelists (1935, as Early Victorian Novelists; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

[13]Gordon Ray relates a similar personal experience in his "Trollope at Full Length," Huntington Library Quarterly, 31, No. 4 (August, 1968), p. 312.

[14]Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel (1943; rpt. New York: Holt, 1954), p. 287.

[15]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 307.

[16]Beatrice Curtis Brown, Anthony Trollope (1950; rpt. London: Arthur Barker, 1969). A. O. J. Cockshut, Anthony Trollope (1955; rpt. London: Methuen, 1968). Rafael Helling, A Century of Trollope Criticism (1956; rpt. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1967). Bradford A. Booth, Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958).

[17]Typical of this kind of approach are Mario Praz, The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, trans. Angus Davidson (1956; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History (New York: Dutton, 1954); and Frank O'Connor, The Mirror in the Roadway: A Study of the Modern Novel (New York: Knopf, 1956).

[18]Arthur Mizener, The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), Chapter II.

[19]Robert M. Polhemus, The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

[20]James Pope Hennessy, Anthony Trollope (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971). Ruth apRoberts, Trollope: Artist and Moralist (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971). David Skilton, Anthony Trollope and His Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of mid-Victorian Fiction (London: Longman, 1972).

[21]Anthony Trollope, The New Zealander, ed. N. John Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

[22]This is my own estimate. Establishing the exact number of Trollope widows is impossible. Minor characters referred to as, say, "Lady Smith" and "Mrs. Jones" sometimes appear with little or no background detail. Where there is no mention of a husband, I have assumed that such characters are widows.

[23]The "good" widow is found in Deuteronomy (10:18, 24:17, 14:29, 24:19-21), Job (24:3), Isaiah (1:17), Matthew (23:14), Mark (12:40, 12:42-44), and James (1:27). The "bad" widow is found in Leviticus (21:14), Ezekiel (44:22), I Corinthians (7:8-9). Paul speaks of both kinds of widows in I Timothy 5:3-16. All references are to the King James Bible.

[24]Katherine James, The Widow in Jacobean Drama, Doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1973, p. 77.

[25]Katherine James, p. 83.

[26]LuEmily Pearson, Elizabethans at Home (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), Chapter 7.

[27]Helena Znaniecki Lopata, Widowhood in an American City (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1973). Peter Marris, Widows and Their Families, Reports of the Institute of Community Studies (1964; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

[28]Sometimes a widow's age is given. Otherwise, it may be estimated in relation to other characters, particularly by the ages of grown-up children.

# CHAPTER I

## THE STATUS OF ENGLISH WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The problems of widows in Trollope's novels are clearly comprehensible within the larger context of the status of middle-class and upper-class English women in the nineteenth century. For women of the upper classes, the period was paradoxical: women were idealized in theory, but denigrated in actuality. Traditional patriarchal values prevailed, although during this time the first significant changes in women's legal and social status were achieved.

Orthodox opinion sanctified women to an ideal of Woman, a being finer and more spiritual than gross men. But putting Woman on a pedestal meant little to women in a practical sense. Since women were thought to be weak intellectually as well as physically, they were expected to defer to invariably superior masculine judgment. Therefore, the idealistic elevation of Woman fitted smoothly with the actual subordination of women; Woman's spiritual superiority was outweighed by her inferiority to men in all other respects. Both sides of the paradox are readily apparent in the works of popular writers throughout the century. Two poems

and a printed lecture are representative and received a particularly enthusiastic response: Tennyson's The Princess (1847), Patmore's The Angel in the House (1854-56), and Ruskin's "Of Queens' Gardens" (Sesame and Lilies, 1865). Each stresses Woman's moral superiority, but limits its exercise to the home.

Only one feminine role was conceived as possible or socially permissible, that of wife and mother. Female education and accomplishments were directed towards this destiny. Demands were heard that women be considered men's equals, but the revolutionary nature of the idea, its unthinkable-ness, caused such views to be received with outrage, contempt, or laughter. The most vigorous early attack on the status quo was made by Mary Wollstonecraft, whose A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) is a plea that women are rational creatures capable of handling nearly everything that men can. Coming from a known radical at the time of the French Revolution, its effect on a frightened, conservative society can be imagined.[1] A more effectual subsequent assault was launched by John Stuart Mill, who wrote On the Subjection of Women in 1861 and published it eight years later. He become the first man of stature in the nineteenth century to advocate equality for women. His essay, more dispassionate and lucid than Miss Wollstonecraft's, has become the classic statement on

women's wrongs. A synthesis of the arguments for reform was made by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in Women and Economics (1898). Mrs. Gilman summarizes the narrowness imposed on Victorian women and envisions the necessity both for egalitarian marriage and for women to work outside the home.

The actual subordination of women, as attacked by these three writers, was sanctioned by law. While unmarried women over twenty-one had some legal standing, married women had none. Upon marriage, a woman's money and property became her husband's to dispose of at will, regardless of her wishes. Her earnings, if any, had to be turned over to the husband on his demand. Legal separation was difficult to obtain and divorce was not only rare, but extremely expensive, requiring a special Act of Parliament. In the event of separation or divorce, the husband automatically received custody of the children. Legal redress for these obvious inequities came slowly and in the face of much opposition. The three most basic pieces of legislation affecting English women in the nineteenth century were the Infant Custody Act (1839), the Marriage and Divorce Act (1857), and the Married Woman's Property Act (1882).

The basis for the legal and social subordination of women was their physical weakness (as opposed to male bodily strength), which easily translated into intellectual weakness. The male virtues--strength of mind, detachment,

seriousness, and logic--seemed obviously required to balance female defects. Everyone knew that women were frail vessels--emotional, self-centered, frivolous, and irrational.

Because women were regarded as weak-minded and since motherhood beckoned, the kind of education they received was different and less substantial than that of men of the same class. That women's weak-mindedness might have some connection with their education was a thought confined to such disturbers-of-the-peace as Mary Wollstonecraft. Women's weakness formed not only an appeal to men's sense of chivalry but was also a vital ingredient in the idealization of Woman. Since Woman was thought to have a sacred mission in the home, she required male protection against the assaults of the outside world to save her from distress and spiritual contamination.

Let us examine more closely four related factors affecting the status of women in the nineteenth century: the question of women's nature; the extent of women's education; the importance of women to the concept of the family; and the forces subversive to the existing order.

Women's nature. There was actually little dispute about women's nature during the nineteenth century, except on the part of a few dissidents. Women's "nature" as a term refers simultaneously to female biological and

psychological characteristics, upon which wide-ranging social conclusions were based. Conventional opinion held no doubt that male and female natures were distinctive and that the difference was rooted in female physiological inferiority. The virtues conceded to women's nature would seem to be those not particularly esteemed as male attributes.

> Male intelligence was greater than female, men had greater independence and courage than women, and men were able to expend energy in sustained bursts of physical or cerebral activity. Men were thus activists and excelled in the species-preserving capacities of egoism. Women on the other hand possessed the social talents. They were superior to men in constancy of affection and sympathetic imagination. They were patient because of their passivity and the need to store energy . . .[2]

The stored energy was necessary to meet women's reproductive requirements. Biological destiny, it was thought, limited women's ability to do much more than bear children and also restricted their potential development as individuals.[3] The narrow social constraints placed on female activity, the necessity of "lady-like" behavior, further emphasized that passivity believed basic to women's nature. Mary Wollstonecraft was scornful of the insipid virtues highly prized in women.

> Women, commonly called Ladies, are not to be contradicted in company, are not allowed to exert any manual strength; and from them the negative virtues only are expected, when any virtues are expected, patience, docility, good-humour, and flexibility; virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of the intellect.[4]

Agnes Wickfield, in David Copperfield, illustrates how esteemed these qualities were. In real life, such negative virtues affected women's perception of themselves and showed them the small importance of their own wishes. As John Stuart Mill puts it,

> All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men: not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections.[5]

Most contemporaries would have disregarded the contention that these values were culturally disseminated; instead, these conclusions would appear to be firmly rooted in women's nature. After accepting the principle of female self-abnegation, Dorothea Brooke discovered its falsity in Middlemarch.

Conventional values were strongly reinforced throughout the nineteenth century by the middle-class moral arbiters of the time, the Evangelicals. Their sectarian societies, tracts, and books upheld a rigidly conservative view of the nature and role of women.[6] The conservative stance, the most prevalent in the century, was only one of three basic attitudes towards women, according to Walter Houghton.

> . . . best known is that of the submissive wife whose whole excuse for being was to love, honor, obey--and amuse--her lord and master, and to

> manage his household and to bring up his children.[7]

At the other end of the social spectrum is the liberal view of women that so horrified the traditional-minded.

> . . . the "new woman," in revolt against her legal and social bondage (and against the boredom of life in homes where servants and nurses now do all the household chores), and demanding equal rights with men: the same education, the same suffrage, the same opportunity for professional and political careers.[8]

Between the two extremes was the moderate position that recognized the need for some reform, but was unwilling to contemplate a complete change.

> By all means let us remove the legal disabilities and give "more breadth of culture"; but higher education is unwise, the vote is dubious, and professional careers are dangerous. For after all woman is <u>not</u> man; she has her own nature and function in life, not inferior to his but entirely different; and the only test to apply to the "woman question" is simply, "Does this study or this activity help or injure her womanhood?"[9]

The moderate view concedes very little; it is really the conservative attitude, with minor emendations. There is no awareness, I think, that in removing legal disabilities and in allowing more culture into women's lives, further and more unacceptable demands might eventually follow.

The commonly held assumption of feminine inferiority basic to the conservative and moderate viewpoints was transmuted into a theoretical feminine moral superiority. The process may be seen, Houghton believes, in two very popular works, Tennyson's <u>The Princess</u> (1847) and Ruskin's

"Of Queens' Gardens" (1865). Both works support the moderate view of women as complementary to men; Houghton thinks that from this stance came the idealization of Woman or (as he calls it) "woman worship."[10] Houghton may be correct in this conclusion but does not explain at all clearly the process by which actual inferiority becomes moral superiority. Nor does he examine The Princess with much closeness.

I would agree with Houghton that Ruskin's lecture fully, dramatically expounds the moderate position and further raises it a notch to become "woman worship." Although Houghton fails to explain the logic behind this change in emphasis, it seems to me that the reasoning worked this way: the moderate view saw men and women as complementary to each other, as theoretical equals. Women, however, were still regarded as inferior in some respects to men but, in other ways, as superior. Concentration on their superior aspects, together with minimizing their inferiority, became "woman worship." I question Houghton's belief that Tennyson came to the same definite and optimistic conclusion of feminine superiority in some areas. To my mind, the resolution of The Princess is less definite, more tentative, and altogether more fragile. Princess Ida's college for women is closed by male physical force. The Prince, her fiancé, is in some degree sympathetic to her aspirations. He expresses, near the poem's end, the moderate position on women.

> . . . either sex alone
> Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
> Nor equal, nor unequal. Each fulfils
> Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
> Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
> The single pure and perfect animal,
> The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke,
> Life.[11]

This vision of an ideal marriage seems to display an equality between the partners. However, it is somewhat misleading in its generalizations. Earlier in the poem the Prince is more explicit.

> For woman is not undevelopt man,
> But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
> Sweet Love were slain; his dearest bond is this,
> Not like to like, but like in difference.
> Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
> The man be more of woman, she of man;
> He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
> Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
> She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
> Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind . . .[12]

Since the Prince is the voice of common-sense moderation in the poem, this passage carries the stamp of approval. When the Prince looks forward to an improved future of greater cooperation between the sexes, it is a world in which the distinctive sex roles remain basically the same. The changes consist of an enlargement of sympathies, in cooperation, and in an awareness that the sex roles are complementary. Female subordination remains.

The conservative, moderate, and liberal views on women's nature all appear in <u>The Princess</u>. The conservative position is represented by the Prince's companions and father,

but receives its most pointed exposure inthe Prince's description of his mother, which makes evident that conventional female inferiority could be elevated into moral superiority.

> . . . one
> Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
> Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
> No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
> In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
> Interpreter between the gods and men,
> Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
> On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
> Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
> Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
> And girdled her with music.[13]

From this paragon the Prince says he acquired his "advanced" (i.e., moderate) views on women. The mother's description, in its idealization and sentimentality, anticipates similar attitudes in The Angel in the House.

The liberal view of women's nature is represented in Tennyson's poem by Princess Ida. The male characters cannot comprehend the magnitude of her vision of women's potential, which is derided and defeated. Nor can the men understand why she is troubled. The Prince's sympathy enables him to see little more than her innate nobility; Tennyson himself seems ambivalent about Princess Ida. Her spiritual isolation and defeat make her, I think, a tragic figure. No character in the poem, not even its author, ever answers the sense of women's grievance that moves Princess Ida.

> . . . you have known the pangs we felt,
> What heats of indignation when we heard
> Of those that iron-cramp'd their women's feet;
> Of lands in which at the altar the poor bride
> Gives her harsh groom for bridal-gift a scourge;
> Of living hearts that crack within the fire
> Where smoulder their dead despots; and of those,--
> Mothers,--that, all prophetic pity, fling
> Their pretty maids in the running flood, and swoops
> The vulture, beak and talon, at the heart
> Made for all noble motion. And I saw
> That equal baseness lived in sleeker times
> With smoother men; the old leaven leaven'd all;
> Millions of throats would bawl for civil rights,
> No women named . . .[14]

There is no response to this, no discussion of the issues raised. The reason may be because the emphasis is on barbaric practices elsewhere and because what goes on in "sleeker times" remains unexplained.

The poem also fails to resolve another crucial question. "The Princess . . . deals with the . . . fundamental issue of the marriage relationship after women have been allowed to exploit their intellectual capacity."[15] Princess Ida is an educated, articulate woman, able to think for herself, and representative of the liberal view of women's nature. How such a woman could accept the traditional female subordination in marriage remains unexplored. The Princess combines a basic affirmation of the conservative ideas with a gloss of moderation. Its support of the moderate position is not nearly so whole-hearted as in "Of Queens' Gardens."

Houghton believes that the most important exposition of the moral superiority of women is to be found in Ruskin's

"Of Queens' Gardens" from Sesame and Lilies (1865).[16] Ruskin grounds his belief in the superiority of women's nature on an examination of Shakespearean heroines and noble female characters in Greek literature who inspire their men to do what is right. Ruskin also reiterates the conservative commonplaces of the female-physiology-is-destiny and thus arrives at sexually distinct natures and roles.

> The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,--and her intellect is not for invention, or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision.
>
> . . .
>
> Her great function is Praise: she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation.[17]

This exalted view does not interfere with "a true wifely subjection" for "it is a guiding, not a determining function."[18] The requirements for fulfilling what Ruskin conceives as a sacred mission demand, however, little less than perfection. In the terms in which Ruskin describes these prerequisites, it is possible to see clearly the foundations on which "woman worship" is erected.

> . . . to fulfill this, she must--as far as one can use such terms of a human creature--be incapable of error . . . So far as she rules, all must be right, or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise--wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may

> never fail from his side: wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service--the true changefulness of woman.[19]

Only a Florence Dombey (in Dombey and Son) could live up to this image. Ruskin has given greater sanction and support for the conservative view of women's nature. Their potential discontent has been countered by attaching greater importance to the standard role: a career for women is that of helpmate and supporter of men. The satisfaction for a woman in Ruskin's scheme lies in the knowledge that she has been successful with others. "Of Queens' Gardens" contains no hint of concern with a woman's self-development or of anything for herself; all it concedes is the pleasure of service to others, the satisfaction of self-sacrifice. The idealized Woman envisioned by Ruskin seems to rule over very little and is unable to offer more than moral suasion within the home. What Ruskin has done is to make a virtue out of a necessity: the practical inferiority of women's nature has become a theoretical moral superiority.

"Of Queens' Gardens" may possibly be the most notable and coherent of numerous statements of Woman's moral superiority in the Victorian period. Another popular, and earlier, exposition of similar ideas is Coventry Patmore's long poem, The Angel in the House (1854-56). The poem reputedly is a celebration of marriage and of Woman as wife; so it is,

though most of the poem is devoted to courtship and relatively little to married life. The poem does depict the ideal Woman that men would, presumably, wish to marry. Patmore's sentiments are much the same as Ruskin's, though without the latter's literary references. But Patmore does not see, as does Ruskin, the wider cultural importance of Woman's role and nature.

Patmore sees women as less sinful, more dignified, and modest than men.[20] Love of a good woman does indeed carry a powerful moral force: the first-person male persona vows never to sin because of her influence.[21] Woman's moral superiority is a constant theme in the poem; women effortlessly achieve virtues that men attempt but fail. This is pointed out most clearly in a poem entitled "The Comparison."

> Where she succeeds with cloudless brow,
> In common and in holy course,
> He fails, in spite of prayer and vow
> And agonies of faith and force;
> Or, if his suit with Heaven prevails
> To righteous life, his virtuous deeds
> Lack beauty, virtue's badge; she fails
> More graciously than he succeeds.
> Her spirit, compact of gentleness,
> If Heaven postpones or grants her pray'r,
> Conceives no pride in its success,
> And in its failure no despair;
> But his, enamour'd of its hurt,
> Baffled, blasphemes, or, not denied,
> Crows from the dunghill of desert,
> And wags its ugly wings for pride.
> He's never young nor ripe; she grows
> More infantine, auroral, mild
> And still the more she lives and knows
> The lovelier she's express'd a child.
> Say that she wants the will of man

To conquer fame, not check'd by cross,
Nor moved when others bless or ban;
She wants but what to have were loss.
Or say she wants the patient brain
To track shy truth; her facile wit
At that which he hunts down with pain
Flies straight, and does exactly hit.[22]

Patmore exceeds, in degree, even Ruskin's conviction of the moral superiority of Woman's nature. For man is immeasurably and unalterably beneath Woman, nor could it be otherwise. Not only is Woman's patience, so prized by Ruskin, visible in The Angel in the House but also that child-like quality precious to Tennyson. Woman does not need reason since her intuition suffices. Patmore's poem does not state, as do Tennyson and Ruskin, the theoretical equality of the sexes, nor does it maintain that men and women are complementary.

Womanly submission is more emphasized in Patmore. The courted girl recalls in delight her suitor's words, "How wise in all she ought to know,/How ignorant of all beside!"[23] The girl intends to key all her responses around what she perceives as his taste, his desires of the moment,[24] and this resolve is applauded. Her feelings are described in terms of ecstatic self-abnegation.

A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest;
There's nothing left of what she was;
Back to the babe the woman dies,
And all the wisdom that she has
Is to love him for being wise.[25]

While Ruskin disdained wifely servility, Patmore sees no such subtle distinctions. Patmore simply seems pleased that Woman is so obliging. The similarities between Patmore and Ruskin are evident. Both appear to have no doubts that their viewpoint is not only desirable but entirely possible. There are no difficulties to surmount, no qualifications, in what is perceived as a simple solution to the roles of men and women in an increasingly complex society. Ruskin differs in possessing a high seriousness, a missionary zeal, an intellectuality entirely lacking in Patmore's simpler, easier view.

The conservative view of women as naturally inferior to men, physiologically and psychologically, prevailed throughout the nineteenth century. Few conservatives, however, would go so far as to accept the reaction and misogyny of Schopenhauer, who believed women's proper place was that assigned them in Oriental countries.[26] The moderate position on women's nature softened the basics of the conservative view without disputing their essential validity. Moderates believed in a theoretical equality between the sexes, which were seen as complementary. This concept altered little, aside from conferring greater dignity and purpose on women. Men retained all their supposedly inherent aggressiveness and rational proclivities; women retained all their natural inferiorities, which were partially

negated by a moral superiority over men. Women were thus seen as purer, more spiritual than men and were moral guides within the home. During the nineteenth century the liberal position of natural equality between the sexes remained the property of malcontents and radicals.

The Princess, "Of Queens' Gardens," and The Angel in the House were popular statements of ideas dominant at the time. Tennyson and Ruskin maintain the moderate position on women's nature; Patmore seems more conservative. Of the three works only The Princess displays any awareness of the complex problems of women; however, its compromise resolution does not answer all the questions the poem raises about women's nature.

Women's education. Women's education in the nineteenth century tended to reflect the presumed inferiority of women's nature. While the conservative view of women's nature dictated the limitations and tone of female education, the moderate view seemed to imply the need for more substantive training. Innovations in the period resulted in formal education being opened for the first time to women.

The girl who was to be the submissive helpmate of a stronger-minded, more intelligent man required a suitable education. This kind of education altered only slightly when, later, "woman worship" added moral superiority and a

need for protection from the world to the list of feminine characteristics. The traditional role for women placed a premium on "accomplishments"--graceful, ornamental ways of displaying female talents, and charms, without imposing any undue intellectual strain. A middle-class and an upper-class girl would learn to play the piano, to sing, and to sketch. Such a girl might also make a slight acquaintance with languages, particularly French and Italian. Whatever factual information the young lady might receive in traditional disciplines--history, philosophy, economics--would consist entirely of haphazard smatterings.[27] The girl's real expertise would likely be confined to dancing and needlework. Lessons might be learned at home under the guidance of a governess or a succession of masters in various subjects. The same routine could also be acquired at a female seminary similar to the boarding school attended by Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair.

More important than all these elegant accomplishments was the concern that a young lady learn deportment, an amalgam of decorum and piety. So necessary was the maintenance of a high moral tone in the home that knowledge of the indelicacies of the world outside would be carefully veiled; bowdlerized classics assisted the screening process. Conservative parents in the first half of the century might well forbid their daughters to read novels. In place of

worldly fictions a young lady might be urged to read sermons, religious tracts, the Bible, suitable poetry, and--latterly--didactic religious novels.

The objective of female education was to enhance a girl's eligibility in the marriage market. No other career was thought possible than that of wife. Indeed, had other alternatives beckoned, the conventional female education provided a woman with no qualifications. Becoming a governess, as many did, was not a deliberate choice but a final, desperate resort in which a woman passed on the kind of education she herself had received. The emphasis on elegance and propriety resulted in a frivolous and superficial education that contained little to engage or develop the mind. This was not regarded as a deficiency, for women were thought incapable of intellectual effort and, besides, such mental exertion would be unseemly. The emptiness of women's education was strongly protested by a minority of the disgruntled throughout the century and, in the face of ridicule and hostility, substantial innovations were gradually brought about.

It is hardly surprising that most men would be inclined to think women incapable of rationality and incompetent for the practice of almost any useful occupation. The pioneer feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft, heartily agreed but ascribed female deficiencies as attributable to poor

education rather than as innate to women's nature. Her ideas were not new, and had been anticipated a hundred years earlier by a number of writers--among them Lady Masham, Mary Astell, and Daniel Defoe--in the final decade of the seventeenth century.[28] At that time, the tradition of learned Elizabethan and Jacobean ladies was still a vivid memory which proved women could be educated. To Mary Wollstonecraft, nearly everything negative about women, whether real or imagined, had its origins in miseducation. She believed that women had nothing to occupy their minds and, therefore, busied themselves with an excessive devotion to pleasure and in manipulating those about them.[29] Isabella Thorpe in Northanger Abbey is an example of this vacancy of mind. Female deficiencies could be eliminated, Mary Wollstonecraft believed, if women were permitted to receive a substantive and intellectual education. Even the institution of marriage was harmed by poor female education. A woman's ignorance prevented her from becoming her husband's friend: friendship is between equals and (said Mary Wollstonecraft) man and wife are patently unequal. A true education would help strengthen marriage.

> . . . marriage will never be held sacred till women, by being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions rather than their mistresses; for the mean doublings of cunning will ever render them contemptible, while oppression renders them timid.[30]

Although Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas do not appear unreasonable to today's reader, her observations were received with great hostility. Theories of female education were principally under the control of increasingly influential, very conservative, Evangelical opinion. What Miss Wollstonecraft thought most deplorable was strongly applauded as the norm.

> . . . the educators who followed Mary Wollstonecraft invariably stressed the importance of extreme femininity. Instead of encouraging common interests with men, they urged women to be a species apart. It was not sufficient that women were distinguished from men in various respects that followed from physical and glandular differences. They were to become still more feminine by suppressing certain natural dispositions and by cultivating peculiar modes of conduct. A set of manners and attitudes distinctive to women was to surround them with an aura of protection and mystery. To move out of this orbit, the educators warned . . . would be a serious breach of propriety.
>
> . . .
>
> Invariably the educators tabooed the freedom for which Mary Wollstonecraft had pleaded. Instead of lowering the barrier between the sexes, they insisted upon raising it still higher. Banished was the idea of equality with men. Women were to accept their subordinate position and to stake all upon the bargaining power of their sexual attraction. It was to be their one forte, guarded by rules of decorum and made mysterious by the disguises of frailty.[31]

So rigid and carefully enunciated were the proprieties that a woman could have few socially approved activities aside from her domestic duties. These other activities were, naturally enough, expressions of piety.

> In fact, for a lady of some social standing, virtually the only sanctioned occupations outside the home were teaching Sunday school, distributing Bibles and tracts, and visiting

> the poor. And these were the employments which educators invariably encouraged.[32]

Such limitations strongly reinforced the conservative view of women's nature and required little alteration in the superficiality of female education except, perhaps, to include even heavier concentration on religious training.

Tennyson's The Princess contains no outright prescriptions for female education. It does contain, however, inferences about education that reflect the poem's moderate view of women's nature. Higher education is necessary for women, and Princess Ida is seen as a noble, but impractical, day-dreamer. But her desire for wider knowledge is not wrong. She is consigned to the care of a husband sympathetic enough to allow her, in the future, to pursue informally her intellectual interests. While still maintaining the traditional female role, husband and wife (it is implied) will be companions. This is a definite step beyond the conservative limitations placed on women's education.

The kind of compromise indicated for Princess Ida was unsatisfactory to those partisans of the liberal--or radical--view of women's nature. In an article published in 1851, four years after The Princess, Harriet Taylor Mill argues that the new fashion for marital companionship is nothing more than female subordination in another form. The education needed by a woman in a companionate

marriage was only to serve her husband's wishes more efficiently.

> . . . those who would maintain the old bad principles, mitigating their consequences . . . say, that women should be, not slaves, nor servants, but companions; and educated for that office (they do not say that men should be educated to be the companions of women). But since uncultivated women are not suitable companions for cultivated men, and a man who feels interest in things above and beyond the family circle wishes that his companion should sympathize with him in that interest; they therefore say, let women improve their understanding and taste, acquire general knowledge, cultivate poetry, art, even coquet with science, and some stretch their liberality so far as to say, inform themselves on politics; not as pursuits, but sufficiently to feel an interest in the subjects, and to be capable of holding a conversation on them with the husband, or at least of understanding and imbibing his wisdom. Very agreeable to him, no doubt, but unfortunately the reverse of improving. It is from having intellectual communion only with those to whom they can lay down the law, that so few men continue to advance in wisdom.[33]

In a sense, the subjects on which women were now expected to be conversable were merely updated "accomplishments." Women's knowledge would be so superficial that men's superior knowledge would invariably be secure.

Exactly what Harriet Taylor Mill so despised, Ruskin described thirteen years later in "Of Queens' Gardens" as an ideal situation. Feminine companionship of this kind Ruskin believed to be part of Woman's sacred mission. He thought that while a man should study a language or science thoroughly, "a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may enable her to sympathise in

her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends."[34] To Ruskin, a girl's education should be similar to a boy's, but differently slanted.

> All such knowledge should be given her as may enable her to understand, and even to aid, the work of men: and yet it should be given, not as knowledge,--not as if it were, or could be, for her an object to know; but only to feel, and to judge.[35]

This smattering of knowledge is not, then, for the woman's own sake or for her own information. Instead, it is merely another element of her service, another way to make more complete her self-abnegation. Sir Willoughby Patterne in The Egoist would have found such a conclusion entirely correct. Ruskin's beliefs were a means of converting a broadened but still shallow education into a prop for traditional views on women's nature and role.

The exercise of Ruskin's idealized domestic virtues presupposed the existence of a married woman in a materially comfortable home. Not all women would be so fortunate. Yet the fragmentary education which most women received precluded them, as effectively as law, from acquiring the qualifications for virtually any occupation except teaching, for which they were ill-prepared. A nearly total lack of any preparation for teaching led to the establishment of formal education for women.

A charitable group aimed at improving the status of impoverished governesses was organized in the early 1840s;

it was thought that if various levels of achievement could be certified, effective pay scales could be established. The immediate result was a blow to this idea. "The governing body of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution proposed conducting an examination for a diploma but . . . they found that the candidates had no knowledge on which to be examined. . . ."[36] A series of courses to remedy the deficiency was suggested. Frederick Denison Maurice, Professor of Divinity at King's College, London, assumed direction of the effort and was assisted by several faculty colleagues. Classes were soon opened to women other than governesses.

In March, 1848, the enterprise took formal shape as Queen's College.[37] The teachers were all men, since there were no women available with the necessary qualifications.[38] Maurice taught theology; Charles Kingsley taught English literature. Other subjects offered included, in addition to music, "ancient and modern languages, natural philosophy, mathematics, dancing, and the fine arts."[39] Maurice and Queen's College enabled women to receive, for the first time, the same substantial formal education available to their fathers and brothers. Queen's College was conducted and attended by members of the Established Church. Two years later, in 1849, Dissenters founded the "Ladies' College in Bedford Square," which subsequently became a college in the University of London.[40] Public schools, in

the English sense of the term, were soon established for girls.

The two women's colleges founded in London, while revolutionary in their social implications, represented the culmination of ideas advanced in the late seventeenth century. Clement Barksdale, a Church of England clergyman, wrote a tract in 1675 setting forth in detail the organization and objectives of a college for women.[41] Mary Astell published a book in two parts in 1694 and 1697 that contained her somewhat different proposals on the subject. In An Essay upon Projects (1697), Daniel Defoe commented favorably on Miss Astell's scheme and offered further suggestions of his own.[42]

Despite the availability of more substantial alternatives, the tradition of "accomplishments" as sufficient women's education undoubtedly retained its popularity and social approval throughout the nineteenth century. However, well-educated women began to appear, holding qualifications for roles other than wife; the fact of their being educated in a substantive sense gradually began to erode the old concept of the limitations inherent in women's nature.

Neither Patmore nor Ruskin, busily exalting a conservative idyll, seem particularly aware of the radically different concept of women's education already underway by the time The Angel in the House was published and "Of Queens' Gardens" delivered as a lecture. Tennyson cannot

have known that Princess Ida's foolish, wistful vision of the future would eventually arrive at the brink of realization.

> . . . everywhere
> Two heads in council, two besides the hearth,
> Two in the liberal offices of life,
> Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
> Of science and the secrets of the mind;
> Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more;
> And everywhere the broad and bounteous Earth
> Should bear a double growth of those rare souls
> Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the World.[43]

Women and the Family. The Family was a Victorian ideal solidly grounded in the conservative and moderate beliefs about women's nature and on the kind of education these beliefs entailed. Any tampering with the traditional female role was resisted, at least in part, out of fear that this could lead to the destruction of the Family. The Family as an ideal rested on other ideals: the conservative conviction of female inferiority and the not-far-removed moderate belief in female moral superiority. For many women in the period, conventional family life was not a real possibility. However, the Family persisted throughout the century as a cherished ideal. The Way of All Flesh was a heretical reaction to this sanctification of family life.

The stereotype of the perfect Family has, perhaps, only lately lost its luster. In it the father is the wise and benevolent head, the rational, order-giving decision-maker.

The mother is the heart of the family, the emotional support of its members, the person who sees to the efficient running of the household, and to the instilling of moral precepts into the children. Mother, father, and children all love each other. The Family is a patriarchal, authoritarian structure with a special attractiveness for the husband-father.

> The Victorian family was, as near as might be, a self-sufficient unit. Every Englishman's home was his castle. In its sanctities and privacy a man might escape the trials of the outer world and be safe from its prying eyes. The family was indeed a kind of estate, like, say, the British Empire, and subject like it to the benevolent despotism of its lord and master. For it had a lord and master, and his ways were expected to be authoritarian.[44]

The domestic circle was a refuge from the difficulties of the world outside and, however battered by opposition and competition on the job, a man knew that in his home none disputed his wishes or authority. A man's legal position with regard to his family was, for much of the century, virtually unassailable. The husband had lawful control over his wife's property and money, including anything she may have earned; in the event of separation, he received almost automatic custody of the children.

Yet despite the possibilities for domestic tyranny, the reasons for the idealization of the Family were numerous. Men now spent much of their leisure time with their families; formerly, men had led most of their social life in the

company of other men, outside the home.[45] There was also the example of the Royal Family: Queen Victoria's homelife was the opposite to that of her disreputable father and uncles. More basic a reason for the idealization of the Family was the Victorian perception of the family as an immutable basic element in society, a value to believe in during a time of flux.

> As most traditional beliefs and institutions on which stability depends were being questioned or transformed, the Victorian clung the harder to the oldest of all traditions and stressed its ordered hierarchy and daily ritual.[46]

When science seemed to be destroying religion, when the social and economic ramifications of laissez-faire capitalism were uncertain and frightening, then the permanence of the Family as the keystone of society was an urgently necessary belief. Since the Family depended on the continuing subordination of women, it is no wonder that proposals for changing women's status were met with horror and ridicule.

In a roundabout way, the idealization of the Family (and of Woman) also served as "partly an apologia for sex in a period when sex was evil."[47] This is an anomaly at a time when "decent" women, including wives, were believed to experience no sexual desire.[48] At best, wives submitted themselves to the guilty demands of their husbands, for the dutiful purpose of having children. Only "bad" women were believed to feel sexual desire. A young Victorian boy

was brought up to revere women in such a way that would seem to preclude any acceptance of sex as natural.

> He was to consider nice women (like his sister and his mother, like his future bride) as creatures more like angels than human beings--an image wonderfully calculated not only to disassociate love from sex, but to turn love into worship, and worship of purity.[49]

This spiritual love and "woman worship" is the kind apparent in The Angel in the House, in "Of Queens' Gardens," and--to a lesser extent--in The Princess. Such sanction of an ethereal love may well have made the sexual aspect of marriage difficult, but sex could still be subordinated within the structure of the relationship as something permissible, even if deplorable.

Paradoxically, the Family was also regarded as a bulwark against licentiousness. The Family as an ideal was maintained, perhaps rather desperately, in the face of a sexual looseness not only widespread outside the home but apparently on the increase.[50] Given the degree of idealization of Woman and of the Family, it is not surprising to learn that by "1850 there were at least 50,000 prostitutes known to the police in England and Scotland, 8,000 in London alone."[51]

The idealization of Woman made possible the strength of the Family. Destroy the ideal of Woman and the Family would soon collapse, leaving no further defense against rampant sexuality. Frightened conviction that this was a

real possibility might partially account for the disproportionate negative response to attempts at improving women's status.

The concept of the Family rested on a false assumption that all women could or would become wives. But there were, in fact, many more women than men; a continuing concern throughout the period was what to do about the "redundant woman."[52] In the Census of 1851 it was discovered that forty-two percent of all the women between twenty and forty were spinsters.[53] With no other socially-approved alternative to marriage, few middle-class and upper-class women possessed skill sufficient to support themselves other than by needlework or by "governessing." The status of unmarriageable women in a society that venerated marriage was undoubtedly very low. The need of such women for both work and self-respect is the subject of Gissing's novel, The Odd Women.

The ideal of the Family, and of Woman, had to be a dream cherished in the face of antagonistic reality. Mutual affection and respect played little part in many marriages until the 1860s; marriages of convenience, in which the chief motive was financial, were common.[54] Gwendolen Harleth's marriage to Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda is a fictional example. Nor was medical ignorance conducive to happy family life, for the maternal death rate in childbirth was appallingly high.[55] Contraception was

neither well-understood nor socially approved. A "nice" woman might have more reason for fearing her husband's advances than merely a distaste for sex.

The Family, as an ideal, never lost its appeal to the Victorians. So long as belief in the Family was basic to conventional values, the ideal of Woman would also continue to be admired.

Women's status and the forces of change. Conservative (and moderate) opinion on women's nature, on their education, and on the importance of the Family remained dominant in the nineteenth century. Forces subversive of these values were, however, active on two fronts: social theory and law. Social philosophers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, the Saint-Simonians, and John Stuart Mill outraged traditional opinion. Their attacks on the existing organization of society were accompanied by the passage of new laws that rectified the most glaring legal inequities facing women. In addition, the example provided by notable Victorian women--including Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martinaeu, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Queen Victoria herself--had to cast doubt on the idea of innate feminine incapacity.

There was enough truth about women's cultural subordination in radical social theory that such criticism could not forever continue to be dismissed with automatic indignation. The ideas of radical social philosophers provided an

intellectually respectable foundation for reforms in women's status. Mary Wollstonecraft argued against the fundamental belief in women's intellectual incapacity. Her main contention in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) was that cultural patterns form women's characters. In other words, what society expects is what women will be. Miss Wollstonecraft fully agreed that women were empty-headed, irrational, and childish. She attributed this, however, to the kind of superficial and incoherent education that most middle-class women received in order to attract a husband. The chief deficiency in most women was that they had nothing to occupy or exercise their minds; in lieu of anything more rational, they were driven to spend inordinate attention on personal adornment and to acting out their emotions.

The prescribed remedy was a more substantial education similar to men's and a dilution of the strict moral precepts that narrowly limited women's expectations and activities. Miss Wollstonecraft noted the need for female education since not all women would marry and, thus, unmarried women would have to be qualified to hold a job. She pointed out, too, that financial reverses or a husband's death might also require that woman work to support her family. Mary Wollstonecraft did not attack marriage itself, but insisted that a better education for women would assure better marriages: husbands would be inclined to respect wives as equals and their relations would exist on the solid

base of friendship instead of an evanescent infatuation. She bitterly attacked Rousseau's pronouncements on women, probably thus alienating one segment of readers; she poured contempt and mockery on popular books of female manners written by prominent clergymen, thus scandalizing the Evangelicals.

The ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft were reiterated by the Saint-Simonians in the first third of the nineteenth century. The Comte de Saint-Simon was an early socialist, one of the first to face the social implications of the Industrial Revolution; his most notable disciple was August Comte. After Saint-Simon's death in 1825, his followers created a pseudo-religion from the body of his ideas, to which were joined their own amplifications and additions.[56]

> The Saint-Simonians had early subscribed to the policy of "freeing woman" as a necessary accompaniment to freeing the proletariat. They rejected the "stale" Christian idea of female subordination to man: they believed that woman should be granted independence and education in order to share in the progress of the new society based upon universal co-operation.[57]

The exact form equality between the sexes might take was unclear. One possibility seemed to be free love, but the dispute over this led to the movement's falling apart. An appeal for the social and political emancipation of women, published in 1825 by William Thompson of Cork, came to grief for much the same reason. Thompson wrote partly in response to an article by James Mill which he regarded as derogatory

to women. However, Thompson's view of the future unfortunately questioned the viability of marriage as an institution.[58]

While the Saint-Simonians had little direct effect in England, their beliefs about women did attract and influence James Mill's young son.[59] John Stuart Mill professed his deep and continued interest in the Saint-Simonians in his Autobiography.[60] That Mill went beyond the vague pronouncements of the Saint-Simonians is apparent in his essay, On The Subjection of Women (1869), probably the most classic statement written on the subject. The essay is lucid and cogent, presented dispassionately. It is important partly because of Mill's acknowledged stature as an intellectual giant in nineteenth-century social and political theory; the essay, written eight years prior to publication, seems to have brought much adverse criticism on its author.

The essay was divided into four parts. The first explained the difficulty of challenging an accepted opinion, which required no supporting evidence to prove its validity to the believer. Mill mentioned that the treatment of women has always been a significant indicator of the level of any civilization. Women submitted to their inequality because education taught them to accept it; some women did protest, but others were afraid to do so. Mill had an unflattering theory why some men were so violently opposed to equality for women.

> I believe they are afraid, not lest women should be unwilling to marry, for I do not think that anyone in reality has that apprehension; but lest they should insist that marriage should be on equal conditions; lest all women of spirit and capacity should prefer doing almost anything else, not in their own eyes degrading, rather than marry, when marrying is giving themselves a master, and a master too of all their earthly possessions.[61]

In the second chapter, Mill explored women's status before the law, how dependent it was on husbands, and reflected that any brute of a man might have a legal slave to knock about. He saw the family as an oppressive despotism, suggested legal redress for the existing status of women, and believed that women--even if married--might well pursue a career. Mill discussed in the third chapter reasons why women should have the vote; if they seem incapable, this might be ascribed to their inferior education. In the fourth and final chapter, Mill explored the good that would result to society in the emancipation of women. Men would become better since few would so automatically become bullies. There would be personal advantages in marriage between equals. A larger social advantage would be the availability of the brainpower of the other half of the human race. He was uncertain that motherhood was in itself a sufficient occupation. What is remarkable about On the Subjection of Women is its entirely reasonable tone, its lack of anger, its careful consideration of every raised objection. Mills' contentions, however unacceptable to conventional thought, could hardly be dismissed as those of a crackpot.

An important, if less original, figure at the end of the century was Charlotte Perkins Gilman, an American. Her Women and Economics (1898) quickly went through seven editions in England and the United States.[62] Mrs. Gilman synthesized earlier statements of women's problems. Her own contribution was a witty exploration of the illogic of relations between the sexes within the context of analogies with an evolutionary animal world. She was particularly insistent on the necessity for egalitarian marriage and on women's economic and psychological need to work outside the home.

The practical legal situation of women gradually improved throughout the century, even as the theoretical base for women's equality was strengthened. Strangely enough, a spinster had a stronger legal position than a married woman.

> In the middle of the nineteenth century an unattached woman of twenty-one could inherit and administer her own property, over which even her father had no power, but on marriage she was legally an infant, and as a wife she had no right to her own clothes.[63]

Marriage virtually annihilated women in a legal sense and in an economic sense. Shirley Keeldar in Charlotte Brontë's Shirley fears for herself and for her wealth, and with good reason.

> . . . the term "married woman" indicated a woman who had no existence in common law apart from her husband. It meant that she could not sue anybody, nor be sued, nor be called as a witness. It also meant that she could lose the company of her children; her husband could take them from her if he wished, no matter what

> kind of character he had. Any property she owned or inherited became his as a matter of course, and if she earned any money, that belonged to him too.[64]

This basic legal disability is what Mill had in mind when he spoke of inequality in marriage. Caroline Norton, Sheridan's granddaughter, precipitated a public scandal and subsequent change in the law after her estranged husband removed their children from her care and refused her access to them. A similar situation is the focus of Trollope's novel He Knew He Was Right (1869), published in the same year as Mill's essay.

One of the earliest steps in re-defining women's legal position was the Infant Custody Act of 1839, which resulted from Mrs. Norton's exertions. The act permitted a mother to appeal to the courts for guaranteed access to her children if they were removed from her care; she might be awarded custody if the children were under seven years old.[65]

Ordinary people had little possibility of escape from an unbearable marriage partner for the first half of the century. Legal separation was infrequently granted. Divorce was even more rare and required a special Act of Parliament in each case. Lady Clara Pulleyn escaped her brutal husband in The Newcomes by such a divorce, but this was beyond the means of Stephen Blackpool in Hard Times. The cumbersome and expensive procedure was eased with the passage of the Marriage and Divorce Bill (1857), which permitted divorce to be treated as an ordinary court

proceeding. Amendments to the bill prohibited a husband from claiming the earnings of a wife he had deserted, and allowed a separated or divorced wife to inherit or bequeath property. Furthermore, ". . . such a woman could have the power to sue or be sued apart from her husband."[65] This proviso conferred effective civil status upon women, but not full control of their property, which was granted in the Married Woman's Property Act (1882).[67] The availability of divorce did not lead to an avalanche of dissolutions, for divorce was regarded as scandalous, and divorced persons forfeited their social respectability. There were only two hundred divorce cases a year prior to 1870, and not even four hundred a year in the 1890s.[68]

The conservative and moderate concepts of women's nature and role in society continued to be commonly accepted throughout the century. However, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, and others laid the theoretical groundwork for subversion of traditional social beliefs. The laws upgrading women's status which were adopted at wide intervals during the period may not have caused any immediate changes, but formed the nucleus for other, future demands. Honoria, the heroine of The Angel in the House, probably represents the female attitude towards men most approved in the nineteenth century; she is happily submissive, overwhelmingly grateful, and unwearyingly adaptable to the the man who is kind enough to marry her. To this pleasing

basic vision Ruskin added, in "Of Queens' Gardens," the rudiments of an education and the weightiness of a sacred mission as moral preceptress to men. Those who found this sentimentalized picture incomplete, unreal, and patronizing fought hard against it, but without much immediate effect. Mary Wollstonecraft, Princess Ida, and John Stuart Mill might have time and truth on their side, but what they envisioned would not come about in the nineteenth century.

Young female characters in Trollope novels resemble Honoria only superficially, for their trust in men is not limitless and is balanced by an awareness of their personal worth. Trollope espoused the moderate view of women's nature and role. Thus, his ingenues reflect a conventional acceptance, on less exalted terms, of the general ideas contained in "Of Queens' Gardens." But Trollope's young women are never so ethereal or so passive as Ruskin's ideal; they clearly expect to be treated in marriage considerately and without condescension. Their expectations are closer to Princess Ida's than to Patmore's or Ruskin's: they tend to "take with them into marriage intelligence, self-sufficiency and a certain proud consciousness of their own value which makes them reluctant to demand that which should be theirs by right."[69] If Trollope's young female characters do not feel the need for the reform of women's status, it is because they exist on a practical level nearly equal to men. Being a wife, in Trollope, is both more interesting

and more difficult than being a priestess presiding over a shrine.

A widow, however, had no place in the prevailing dialectic since she was no longer a maiden anticipating marriage, nor a married woman with a sacred mission. Because Trollopian widows are placed in a Victorian limbo, it is possible to examine these characters as exceptions to--but prisoners of--conventional expectations, to survey their widowhood as a social and emotional burden complicating the basic problem of being women.

The scope of this dissertation. Trollope seems ahead of his time in awareness of the problems of widows and in an exploration of the subject in his novels. Some widows are little more than background characters; however, widows are major characters in many Trollope novels and the fact of their widowhood is a fertile source of conflict and complication. Important widows in Trollope remain individual characters in particular circumstances, however typical their problems may be.

This dissertation will examine every major widow in Trollope's novels, as well as minor widows significant to the study of the character type. Trollope's dawning comprehension of widows and their difficulties follows a chronological pattern. First come the least complex widows, whose problems are unconnected with their widowhood; this

stage ends with the earliest perception--still fairly rudimentary--of a widow's plight in The Bertrams (written in 1858).[70]

Trollope's second, or middle, stage of dealing with widows is broad and increasingly complicated. It involves three separate successive groups of widows, each more complex than its predecessors. What Trollope discovers in this middle period is the element of self-abnegation and sacrifice that runs through all his more sophisticated studies of widows and widowhood. Middle-period widows fall into three perceptible groups. The first group is depicted as relatively aggressive characters at odds with the circumstances of their lives. However, these widows ultimately sacrifice themselves for their children. The second group of widows consists of passive characters that accept the circumstances of their lives; these widows are sacrificed by their children. The third group, the most subtle widows created by Trollope, is composed of aggressive characters that seek to control or to escape from their circumstances. Motherhood is a negligible factor to these widows, who refuse to sacrifice themselves to what is expected of them. Yet they too are vanquished. Each group represents a different response to the problem of widowhood, of attempting to express individuality or selfhood. Nearly all of Trollope's widows learn that widowhood means defeat and isolation, a dead-end to be escaped only by an improbable

re-marriage. Trollope's final or third period of dealing with widows, near the end of his life, is regressive. It contains few important widows and these chiefly reiterate what he has previously demonstrated.

The organization of the dissertation. There are six chapters, of which this is the first. Chapter II examines Trollope's earliest and least complex widows. Chapters III, IV, and V explore three groups of his most complicated widows. Chapter VI discusses the regressive widows of Trollope's third and final phase.

## Notes

[1]Maurice J. Quinlan, Victorian Prelude (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 140.

[2]Jill Conway, "Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution," in Suffer and Be Still, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 146-7. The Conway essay (pp. 140-54 in the collection) paraphrases basic ideas in The Evolution of Sex by Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson (London, 1889).

[3]Conway, p. 141.

[4]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 101.

[5]On the Subjection of Women (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1971), pp. 30-1.

[6]Quinlan, Chapter 6, pp. 139-59.

[7]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (1957; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 348.

[8]Houghton, p. 348.

[9]Houghton, p. 349.

[10]Houghton, p. 349.

[11]Alfred Lord Tennyson, The Princess, in Poems of Tennyson, ed. Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Riverside Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 175, lines 283-90.

[12]The Princess, in Poems, p. 174, lines 259-68.

[13]The Princess, in Poems, p. 175, lines 298-308.

[14]The Princess in Poems, p. 160, lines 364-78.

[15]John Killham, Tennyson and "The Princess" (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1958), p. 143.

[16]Houghton, p. 343, n.7.

[17]John Ruskin, "Of Queens' Gardens," in Sesame and and Lilies, The Two Paths, The King of the Golden River, by John Ruskin (London: Dent, 1970), p. 59.

[18]Ruskin, p. 59.

[19]Ruskin, p. 60.

[20]Coventry Patmore, The Angel in the House, in The Poems of Coventry Patmore, ed. Frederick Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 83-4.

[21]Patmore, p. 87.

[22]Patmore, pp. 89-90.

[23]Patmore, p. 147.

[24]Patmore, p. 180.

[25]Patmore, p. 180.

[26]Arthur Schopenhauer, "Of Women," Complete Essays of Schopenhauer, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (New York: Willey, 1942), pp. 72-89.

[27]Janet Dunbar, The Early Victorian Woman (London: Harrap, 1953), pp. 34-35. Manuals similar to catechisms were used to drill children in irrelevant facts.

[28]Doris Mary Stenton, The English Woman in History (New York: Macmillan, 1957), Chapter 8, pp. 209-45.

[29]Wollstonecraft, p. 253.

[30]Wollstonecraft, p. 247.

[31]Quinlan, p. 143.

[32]Quinlan, p. 155.

[33]Harriet Taylor Mill, "Enfranchisement of Women," in Essays on Sex Equality, by John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 111-12.

[34]Ruskin, p. 65.

[35]Ruskin, p. 62.

[36]R. Glynn Grylls, "Emancipation of Women," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians (1949; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 256.

[37]Dunbar, p. 140.

[38]Grylls, p. 257.

[39]Dunbar, p. 141.

[40]Dunbar, p. 141.

[41]Stenton, pp. 186-88.

[42]Stenton, pp. 222-27.

[43]The Princess, in Poems, p. 136, lines 155-64.

[44]H. L. Beales, "The Victorian Family," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians (1949; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 344.

[45]Mill, Subjection, p. 120.

[46]Houghton, p. 344.

[47]Houghton, p. 391

[48]E. M. Sigsworth and T. J. Wyke, "A Study of Victorian Prostitution and Venereal Disease," in Suffer and Be Still, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973) pp. 82-83.

[49]Houghton, pp. 354-55.

[50]Houghton, p. 365.

[51]Westminster Review 53 (1850), p. 475; cited by Houghton, p. 366.

[52]Viola Klein, "The Emancipation of Women: Its Motives and Achievements," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians (1949; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 262.

[53]Beales, p. 354.

[54]Houghton, p. 385.

[55]Dunbar, p. 23.

[56]Killham, pp. 29-31.

[57]Killham, p. 32.

[58]Killham, p. 42.

[59]Stenton, pp. 320-23.

[60]John Stuart Mill, Autobiography (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 138-42.

[61]Mill, Subjection, p. 45.

[62]Carl Degler, ed. Women and Economics, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), introduction p. xiii.

[63]Sir Charles Petrie, The Victorians (New York: McKay, 1962), p. 207.

[64]Dunbar, p. 25.

[65]Dunbar, p. 26.

[66]Dunbar, p. 178.

[67]Patricia Thomson, The Victorian Heroine (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 88.

[68]Beales, p. 345.

[69]Thomson, p. 111.

[70]Hereafter, unless otherwise indicated, parenthetical dates after Trollope titles refer to the year(s) in which the particular novel was written. The dates are taken from the detailed calendar of Trollope's life assembled by Michael Sadleir and included in Appendix II of his Trollope: A Commentary.

## CHAPTER II

## TROLLOPE'S WIDOWS: THE EARLY PERIOD (1847-58)

It is axiomatic that a Trollope novel centers upon specific problem situations which, most often, cause characters to be confronted with a difficult ethical choice. The degree of complexity in the problem and the degree of ambiguity in the moral judgment frequently determines the strength of the novel and the stature of its characters. One way in which the significance of a Trollope widow may be appraised is by the seriousness of the problem facing her and the moral cloudiness of her options for solving it.

By this test, the earliest Trollope widows fail. They are presented with relatively minor problems about which the correct decision is clear. In addition, the problems these widows face are not personal and internal, but are created by the same external forces that also provide the solution. The early widows are of minimal value apart from plot requirements. Trollope's perception of widows at this stage is little different from that of other major nineteenth-century novelists. To most of these, widows are occasional and marginal figures, the furniture of an overall setting. To equip the hero with a widowed mother (as in Pendennis)

or to bestow on the heroine a widowed aunt (as in Jane Eyre) helps to characterize the hero or heroine more fully by providing background detail. The widow is rarely important in herself. Sometimes a widow can be a major character, in the sense of precipitating action (as in Pride and Prejudice), but her own social and emotional problems, if any, are irrelevant to the novel.

Widows that are prominent in early Trollope novels exist chiefly as plot devices to forward or retard the conventional young-love story central to English novels of the time. Furthermore, Trollope handles his first widows in a way that precludes basic consideration as serious characters: most are to some extent comic. To be taken seriously, it seems to me, a character's problems must be fundamentally or potentially painful. Some of the early widows are intrinsically comic; others behave sporadically in a comic fashion, or circumstances occasionally make them look foolish. This comic aspect is emphasized by simplification into two distinct stereotypes--the middle-aged widowed mother and the young widow. There is little attempt at development or at individuation of what appear to be stock characters. The stock expectation for each is that widowed mothers should be loving and kind to their children and that young widows should get married again. Only two widows in the early novels might be regarded, in Forster's term, as being "round." But this is relative, since each seems to be an idealized version of the type, the ideal widowed

mother and the ideal young widow. In the early period, widows and widowhood are treated superficially. The widow's problems have no wider social implications beyond the individual novel. Some slight development of the character type is evident in The Bertrams, the last novel written in this earliest stage of Trollope's awareness. However, even here the darker possibilities of the widowed mother and the young widow are raised, but remain unexplored.

The widowed mother. There are six widowed mothers in the early novels, but only three are of any importance. Trollope's first novel, The Macdermots of Ballycloran (1843-45), contains no widows other than two marginal background characters that are little more than names. The first delineated widow is Mrs. Mary Kelly in Trollope's second novel, The Kellys and the O'Kellys (1847). Mrs. Kelly is a prominent character precipitating action in the low-life second plot. But she is little more than a device to unite young-lovers. Mrs. Kelly has no personal problem about which she must make an anguished decision. Instead, the problem is external to her and is not resolved by her.

The question is whether the blackguard Barry Lynch will be able to browbeat his sister Anty (Anastasia) Lynch out of her share of money inherited from their father. When Mrs. Kelly learns that Barry has physically mistreated his sister, she goes to the Lynch house and brings Anty back to stay with her. In taking this action, Mrs. Kelly

shows her own generosity and spirit, but also assists romance. Martin Kelly, her son, has had some interest in marrying Anty for her money; Anty's prolonged stay with the Kellys permits Martin to become genuinely fond of her, to feel sorry for her, and to become protective. The only moral decision, if it is that, which Mrs. Kelly must take is whether to give shelter to Anty Lynch. There is little hesitation, for the correctness of doing so is clear. If Mrs. Kelly feels any qualms about the decision to protect Anty, these are momentarily caused by the ambiguous, intimidating threats of a lawyer hired by Barry Lynch. Her defiance of him requires little courage, for Barry Lynch is a drunken, cowardly villain who will obviously soon be despatched by some other character. Mrs. Kelly does not contrive his removal from the story.

Mrs. Kelly appears to be more important to the novel than the character really is. Trollope endows her with great vitality and forcefulness in a novel in which there are few vivid or strong characters. The high-life plot is static and feeble: the guardian of an heiress refuses permission for her to marry the man she wishes; most of this story is about the two separated lovers' yearning and frustration. It is not particularly interesting apart from the fact that the hero and heroine are the first, and unusually lack-luster, examples of the typical Trollopian feckless young man and spirited young lady. The novel's

chief appeal, due to the insipidity of the high-life plot, is the low-life plot, in which Mrs. Kelly is the most remarkable character. The nominal heroine of the low-life plot is dull and lifeless, so Mrs. Kelly is all the more the center of attention.

Except for the melodramatic fulminations of Barry Lynch and a little pathos about Anty Lynch, the low-life plot is infused with broad comedy. The comic traits that make Mrs. Kelly so attractive, however, carry overtones of caricature. Mrs. Kelly is a domineering character, voluble and sharp-tongued, prone to exaggeration and self-dramatization. She is a good-natured scold, milder but perhaps similar to the shrewish Mrs. Caudle in Douglas Jerrold's popular Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures (published in 1846, a year before The Kellys and the O'Kellys was written).

One basic reason why Mrs. Kelly must, necessarily, be a comic character is because she is a peasant woman rather than a lady. Therefore, according to the critical taste of the time, she could be treated only contemptuously or humorously for the amusement of the socially superior middle-class reader.[1] Undoubtedly readers would also have been conditioned by the contemporaneous novels of Charles Lever to expect the comic from an Irish setting.

Conservative, moderate, and liberal views about women's nature were usually confined within the class structure as applicable only to middle-class and upper-class women. Since

Mrs. Kelly is not a lady, these attitudes are not clearly relevant. To a certain extent, however, the character does represent a conservative viewpoint of women's nature, for she has no life or interests apart from her children and neighbors. The character also illustrates the fact that lower-class women were not bound by the same shackles as their socially superior sisters. Mrs. Kelly is the capable proprietor of an inn and grocery store; she figures in her village as its most substantial citizen, apart from the clergy.

Trollope handles the widow, at this early point in his career, in an entirely conventional manner--as a plot device. In the low-life plot, the chief impetus is the removal of obstacles between the young lovers. Mrs. Kelly assists the process. Trollope has nothing to say about widows or widowhood, and a semi-caricature would not be, in any event, the best vehicle for social or psychological comment. Mrs. Kelly's widowhood is a fact rather than a condition, one that entails no perceptible personal difficulties. The character is prominent, principally by default, due to major defects in the novel.

Trollope's next widow is also superficial, but in a different direction. Instead of a comic widowed mother, there is a pathetic widowed mother. This is Mme. Cathelineau, a French peasant woman briefly glimpsed in La Vendée (1849) mourning the death of her only son. The character is not as

well-integrated with the events of the novel as Mrs. Kelly. Madame Cathelineau is seen in an episode only tenuously connected with the rest of the story. Both Mrs. Kelly and Mme. Cathelineau are exotic characters--lower-class foreign women--about whom no meaningful social comment about widows in the context of English society can be made. In addition, each character represents an emotional extreme, comic or pathetic, so at variance with ordinary life that serious investigation is virtually precluded.

The first widowed mother who approaches a norm recognizable by Trollope and his readers is Mrs. Bessy Woodward, a character in his sixth novel, The Three Clerks (1857). Mrs. Woodward's social credentials are respectable; she is an Englishwoman and a lady, the widow of an Anglican minister and the mother of three daughters who eventually marry the three clerks. Mrs. Woodward is a prominent character at the center of the novel, but chiefly as a passive observer of the action. The character is a plot device for the three love stories, in which she performs both as intermediary and as comforter to the distressed. Less autonomous than Mrs. Kelly, she is more closely integrated into the events of the novel. The principal function of the character is to set the family tone and background for the three Woodward girls.

Mrs. Woodward has no personal problem about which she is compelled to make a difficult decision. The problems

which she faces are those connected with her three daughters, thus external to Mrs. Woodward and not resolved by her. The eldest daughter declines to marry the man her mother thinks most suitable and, instead, marries an inferior who was the rejected suitor's best friend. Mrs. Woodward is compelled to accept this as best she can and also to comfort the rejected man, of whom she is genuinely fond. She is also required to deal with the second daughter, who believed she was being courted by the man who became engaged to her sister. The third daughter causes difficulties through illness and by devotion to a charming, unstable scamp whom Mrs. Woodward likes but disapproves of. There are no ready or pat solutions for these problems which must, in any case, be settled by the daughters and their young men. What Mrs. Woodward supplies is little more than patience and love.

Mrs. Woodward is prominent particularly in the novel's first half as background for her daughters. She stands out as the only mature character is a small crowd of young lovers, but becomes even more noticeable because most of the novel's other characters are caricatures. She is also required to react to events involving the three clerks that are not directly connected with romance, for her household is at the center of the novel, and virtually all information reaches there. Hers is the only standard, commonsense adult viewpoint in The Three Clerks, a factor that makes

this character especially useful as a narrative device. Trollope provides the character with intelligence, good-nature, and a sense of humor. She seems to be an ideal mother, with all positive and no negative points. Mrs. Woodward is fully characterized starting with a typical Trollopian introductory block summary and, less obtrusively, by her constant presence on the scene with her daughters. Mrs. Woodward's sole unorthodox aspect is that she lives with her daughters almost as a sister. She does not order her children's lives and, except with the youngest daughter, does not exercise parental authority.

Mrs. Woodward is not exactly a comic character. But occasional misjudgments and an inability to control the daughters sometimes make her the butt of comic situation. Mrs. Woodward has two basic, opposing reactions to events--tender concern or laughter. And, often enough, the one who laughs becomes part of the joke.

Conservative, moderate, or liberal views about women's nature cannot be applied with any exactitude to Mrs. Woodward. Her absorption in her daughters and the traditional lady-like "accomplishments" in a household somewhat isolated from the world would seem to indicate a conservative education and outlook. But signs point more strongly to an implied moderate stance. Mrs. Woodward is clearly as intelligent as any male character in the novel, and obviously superior to some. She is not treated with condescension by male

characters. This is standard in Trollope: although female characters may defer to men, they are not submissive, for the women are confident of their own worth and expect to be treated accordingly.

Trollope displays with Mrs. Woodward no increased perception about widows and widowhood; he does demonstrate a slightly more subtle awareness of domestic tensions. Mrs. Woodward's widowhood is a fact of marital status that carries no further emotional connotations. The character is primarily important as the prototype of subsequent good mothers in Trollope. She is an idealized widowed mother and, by inference, the remarkable affection her daughters display is connected with her treatment of them. Mrs. Woodward's general philosophy might be quickly summarized. Children must be approached as individuals and as having the freedom to make their own choices, even if these are not approved by the mother. The children also have a right to privacy respected by the mother. While the mother's ability to order her grown children's lives is limited, she must stand ready to pick up the emotional pieces if her children make disastrous choices. The negative aspects of being a mother, particularly as a widow without the support of a husband, are not fully developed in The Three Clerks, but Trollope will later explore the subject thoroughly. With Mrs. Woodward there is already the hint that a mother is--to a considerable extent--at the mercy of grown children

who are able to cause her great pain. Then, too, the theoretical, socially-sanctioned line of authority between parent and child is not always operative. This can be more meaningful than merely a failure to enforce obedience: Mrs. Woodward is occasionally a little afraid of her eldest daughter. The positive aspects of being a mother, even a widowed mother, are very strongly stressed. While Mrs. Woodward may be made anxious by her daughters, she also shares vicariously in their happiness and achievements. Mrs. Woodward is an especially attractive character--not as a widow but as a mother. Even the character's essential passivity and non-decisiveness appears in a favorable light as forbearance and wisdom in dealing with her daughter's affairs. She is a major character not because she holds any intrinsic interest, but as the sympathetic dispenser of comfort to the sore spirits of others and as the sensible observer at many of the novel's major scenes. She becomes less important when her typical responses have been established.

A more minor widowed mother, Lady Scatcherd, appears in Doctor Thorne (1858). Despite her title, the character is an English peasant women, the widow of a self-made railway magnate. She is a pitiable and marginal character, whose title is a mockery to herself and to all about her. Lady Scatcherd does, however, mark one small advance beyond the existing widowed-mother stereotype. Her relations with

her only child are not cordial; her son mistreats her and her dominant emotion toward him is fear. Mrs. Kelly, however exasperating to her children, clearly holds a mutually affectionate relationship with them; not only affection, but equality exist between Mrs. Woodward and her daughters.

The most important widow in the Early Period is neither as funny as Mrs. Kelly nor as fully characterized as Mrs. Woodward. She has much in common with Lady Scatcherd. The Bertrams (1858) is significant as containing the first serious, if perfunctory, examination of the problems of a widow. The widowed mother, Mrs. Wilkinson, is important only functionally in the second of the novel's three plots. Other than as a plot device, used to separate young-lovers, the character has no intrinsic interest to Trollope. She does illustrate his first minute awareness that being a widow entails problems for herself and for her family.

The basic conflict, over money, soon becomes enlarged into a poisonous family quarrel. Yet the fundamentals of the problem are external to Mrs. Wilkinson, for the situation is created and solved by other characters. She could alleviate the difficulty by exercising a clearly correct choice, but refuses to do so. When Mrs. Wilkinson's minister husband dies, the patron of the living offers to appoint her son to the vacancy if he will agree to surrender seventy percent of the income to his mother. Since he has

no other means to provide for his mother and sisters, Arthur Wilkinson reluctantly accepts the condition. His acceptance of this stipulation, however, precludes his proposing marriage to the girl he loves, for what remains of his income is too small to support a wife. Mrs. Wilkinson, while initially grateful, soon comes to see the income as rightfully hers. She is pleased by the arrangement which leaves her in charge of her own home, and to a large extent, in control of her son. She becomes increasingly angry at his wish to marry, for she sees no need for him to do so. Moreover, she is unaware of any sacrifice on his part. While there are few openly bitter passages between the mother and son, the mutual antagonism is intense. An unambiguous solution to the problem would seem to be for Mrs. Wilkinson to turn over some portion of her income to her son, but she never gives this the slightest consideration.

Mrs. Wilkinson is characterized in the sketchiest way. This is unusual for several reasons. First, while she is not an important character in the novel as a whole, she is actually the sole substance of the vapid second plot. In addition, Trollope ordinarily shows the self-justification of even the worst characters. But in the case of Mrs. Wilkinson, there is little interior disclosure of her thoughts to compensate for her son's hostility. In the absence of this balance, she must be accepted on Arthur's judgment as

stupid and selfish. Trollope's condemnation may be attributed to his seeing the character as the worst kind of mother (just as Mrs. Woodward was the best), so that her faults can thus be interpreted as moral flaws. Her own interests, as apart from her son's, are never considered.

Trollope dismisses the real social and emotional questions raised with Mrs. Wilkinson by reducing her from a serious character to a caricature. She is regarded as ludicrous in her semi-conscious wish to be vicar of the parish; her absorption in the liturgical aspects of the ministry is not only laughable, but also improper. When her son goes away for an extended time, she bullies his substitute so successfully that she is able to carry on nearly all the functions of a clergyman save those in a church service. Mrs. Wilkinson follows, in a more modest way, the path blazed two years earlier by Mrs. Proudie.

The conservative viewpoint of women's nature seems to be an operative principle in The Bertrams. Within the context of the novel, Mrs. Wilkinson's aggressiveness and self-assertion exceed the proper limits of her womanly and motherly station. The heroine of the main plot similarly overreaches herself. The saintly second heroine who wishes to marry Arthur Wilkinson is, for Trollope, uncharacteristically submissive and mawkish. Mrs. Wilkinson is removed as an obstacle by unconvincing contrivance. Trollope sends the character off on a humiliating fool's

errand, after which she suddenly confesses her error and places herself in her son's hands. She is thereupon whisked off to permanent exile in Bath. Although his mother has not disgorged any part of her income, Arthur Wilkinson decides to marry since he can augment his pittance by preparing small boys for admission to the public schools.

Mrs. Wilkinson is the first Trollope widow with serious personal problems of her own. Yet Trollope not only fails to explore the implications of these, but dismisses the widow and her difficulties out of hand, while treating the character with unusual severity. Why Trollope does all this can only be conjectured. Mrs. Wilkinson is the first widow to depart entirely from the conventional benevolence of the stereotyped loving mother. To face up to this might require a radical re-thinking of accepted values--always an unpleasant task. By eliminating Mrs. Wilkinson so easily, Trollope is also able to eliminate the problems she has raised. Soon enough, however, Trollope will come to grips with that which he now avoids.

Mrs. Wilkinson's problems are distinctly those of a widow, although complicated by the character's own personality, and have wider implications beyond the novel. Without a husband in a society that sanctified the role of wife, the widow is adrift on her own spiritual and economic resources. The widow's problems, as set forth in The Bertrams, appear to fall under three headings:

the widow's own emotional difficulties and lack of status, her relations with her children, and her financial plight. The widow's personal emotional problems are scarcely touched upon in the superficial treatment accorded Mrs. Wilkinson; Trollope later explores these matters more skillfully. The character's interest in clerical affairs might have been attributed--if handled seriously--to a widow's need to find a new role or to her desire to keep the husband's memory alive.[2] Closely connected to a widow's personal emotional problems is the question of her relations with her children. In The Bertrams, Mrs. Wilkinson's conflict with her son is described rather than analyzed, and the affair is seen exclusively from the son's point-of-view. Related issues are raised but are unresolved. How much can a widowed mother reasonably expect from her children? What kind of authority can she still exercise over grown children? From the child's standpoint, just how far must filial respect be carried? The financial aspect is not closely examined. How can an improverished widow maintain herself and her daughters without taking much of her unmarried son's income?

The widowed mothers in Trollope's earliest novels are similar characters having little complexity or intrinsic interest, and whose chief use is as adjuncts to a courtship story. However, some slight development in Trollope's perception of the widow is evident. The first

important widowed mother (Mrs. Kelly) is a foreign peasant and a comic shrew; this approach is too limited for further development. After Lady Scatcherd, peasant widows no longer appear nor--with two exceptions--do non-English widows. The second important widowed mother (Mrs. Woodward) represents the positive norm, the good mother. This kind of widow becomes a standard fixture in later novels, but limitation to background use largely precludes further dramatic development. The third important widowed mother (Mrs. Wilkinson) exhibits a maternal selfishness that, in its various manifestations, becomes a fertile field for Trollope's exploration. All the widowed mothers before Mrs. Wilkinson show some signs of positive maternal benevolence. She represents the negative norm, the poor mother. Her situation is the first to indicate that a widowed mother's needs may not be identical with those of her child. The resultant conflict is smoothed over by authorial sleight of hand; neither party experiences more than temporary distress.

The young widow. There are only three young widows in the early Trollope novels. One is important as a character, but not as a widow; the two others are minor characters, but of some significance as widows. The first young widow is Eleanor Bold in Barchester Towers (1855-56). She is the heroine of the courtship plot, which is of equal

prominence in the novel to the story of Mrs. Proudie's struggle for clerical power. So Eleanor Bold, unlike the widowed mothers, is not marginal to the action. Her problem does not entail any delicate ethical choice. It is more practical: whom should she marry as her second husband? She is provided with three suitors, two of them are clearly ineligible, and a third who is as worthy as he is tongue-tied. A curious twist to Eleanor Bold's problem is her unawareness that she has one. The reader, the narrator, and the other characters are very conscious that she is ready for a new husband; Eleanor Bold, however, shows no interest in re-marrying nor any awareness, save near the end, that she is being courted.

The character's status as a widow is almost irrelevant. In general, Eleanor Bold is little different from many typically vivacious and virginal Trollope heroines. Later young widows bear the imprint of experience, of a sobering maturity, but this is not true of Eleanor Bold. As a widow, she is provided with a respectable inheritance, which makes her a marital prize, and also with a young child. These are the only indications that she has been married.

Eleanor Bold is neither a complicated nor a stupid character. But her naive obliviousness of the other characters' intentions is basic to the comedy of the romance plot. She sometimes looks foolish, yet her indignation when

finally enlightened is worthy of Belinda in The Rape of the Lock. Despite the attractiveness of the character, Eleanor Bold is, perhaps, slightly too sweet, and her innocence--or ignorance--tends to make her insipid. She is almost the least interesting female character in the novel.

A few wider social implications are perceptible in the case of Eleanor Bold. Most noticeable is the influence of her money, which lends weight to her wishes and allows her a freedom of action, an independence unrestrained by male relatives. It is also obvious that there is an urgency among the other characters that she be quickly put under the control of a husband. The tacit reasons seem to be that she is not quite socially respectable without a husband and that she is incapable of taking care of herself. Apparently, an independent woman with the means to maintain herself was a dismaying and disreputable prospect. Eleanor Bold seems to be representative of the moderate view of women's nature: she is complementary but fundamentally inferior. While basically dutiful, the character's education and background in clerical society make her intelligent enough to understand and sympathize with the religious scruples of Francis Arabin, the theological controversialist, whom she later marries.

Two young widows appear briefly in The Bertrams (1858), but Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price are incidental to any of the

novel's plots. Their problem is the same as Eleanor Bold's: re-marriage. They are, however, intensely urgent about finding husbands. Love does not enter into the matter as much as does the need for the financial and social support a husband would provide. Though background information about the two characters is sparse, their late husbands seem to have been minor officials in the service of the East India Company. Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price are recent widows, of less than a year's standing, and poor. They attempt to find husbands while returning aboard ship from India to England.

The whole episode is treated in a farcical manner. The widows are uncomplicated characters with a hint of internal seriousness that is not developed. They are comically transparent in their objectives, and hunt men almost as a pair; their leading suitors are nearly caricatures. One widow is successful, while the other is not. Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price are almost a low-comedy team, one of the few pieces of relief in an otherwise grim novel. Part of the comedy is the widows' brazen behavior so soon after bereavement; both resume their weeds and their tears at the dock in Southampton, where relatives await them. The activities of the two characters must be treated comically, because if handled in a straightforward way, such behavior would surely be scandalous and call for condemnation.

In a wider context, Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price illustrate the impracticality of the conservative and moderate views of women's nature, which do not take into account either widowhood or the necessity of economic subsistence. But the two characters seem to be socially ambiguous and may, or may not, be ladies. This doubt may serve to excuse their behavior and also to cloud the issue of whether the theories about women's nature are applicable to them. While Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price are too aggressive and worldly-wise to be the helpless widows deprived of male common-sense that Mary Wollstonecraft envisioned,[3] they could well be case studies supporting the liberal view of women's nature. For the two have no ability to earn their living and are, in lieu of this, forced to accept any marriage that provides a decent financial base.

Trollope's perception of the young widow is more genuine here than earlier with Eleanor Bold, but he does not yet seem inclined to take it very seriously, for the easy and natural solution is re-marriage. Trollope's later young widows do not find so simple an answer. While Trollope's faith in marriage is as firm as Coventry Patmore's (if less high-flown and sentimental), he eventually grasps the fact that re-marriage is not always a viable possibility for widows. The young widows in Trollope's earliest novels are not complex characters. Their problem is re-marriage, as a practical matter that

involves no internal personal emotional stress. Their widowhood entails no problems that Trollope examines. Instead, it merely puts them back among the women available for and expectant of marriage, thus making the three young widows principals in comic courtship stories. Eleanor Bold appears to be the object of a widow-hunt, decorously refined from the ribald Jacobean conventions. Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price also recall the widow-hunt, but reverse it by being themselves the aggressors. Eleanor Bold seems to stand for the ideal of what a young widow should be, while Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Price may stand for the actuality of what a young widow is.

Conclusions. None of the widows in Trollope's earliest novels is an entirely serious character. The real emotional and social burdens their status imposes upon them are not dealt with by Trollope. Despite the superficiality with which he handles widows at this time, some increased perception is evident. The eight widows mentioned in this chapter fall into the following chronological pattern of creation: Mrs. Kelly (1847); Mme. Cathelineau (1849); Eleanor Bold (1855-56); Mrs. Woodward (1857); Lady Scatcherd (1857-58); Mrs. Wilkinson, Mrs. Cox, and Mrs. Price (1858). The first three widows--Mrs. Kelly, Mme. Cathelineau, and Eleanor Bold--conform to positive visions of what widowhood, or motherhood, should be. These

characters exhibit little sense of strain but fit, more or less smoothly, as calculated component parts of the novels in which they appear. The last four widows--Lady Scatcherd, Mrs. Wilkinson, Mrs. Cox, and Mrs. Price--show the strain of real problems, of deviations from the ideal, which Trollope is as yet unwilling to face. These characters do not fit so smoothly the novelistic purpose for which they were intended. Mrs. Woodward is balanced between the two groups: an ideal character that shows some strain but whose problems are fairly manageable.

Trollope does not, at this time, find as much potential in young widows as in widowed mothers. A widowed mother brings with her a tangled array of relationships and obligations; a young widow, not so well-established and relatively more isolated, appears likely to bring less dramatically promising impedimenta to the novel. Trollope's view of the young widow will subsequently deepen.

The three semi-comic widows in the last novel of this period are notable for their aggressiveness, as well as for their urgency about money--a concern that permeates The Bertrams. The aggressiveness and mixed motives of these characters are factors Trollope will soon take more seriously. His interest in widows has become fixed: Trollope's next three novels are dominated by serious widows who are nearly compulsive about power or money.

## Notes

[1]Skilton, Chapter 4.

[2]Lopata, p. 92.

[3]Wollstonecraft, pp. 87-89.

# CHAPTER III

## TROLLOPE'S WIDOWS: THE MIDDLE PERIOD, PART ONE (1859-61)

Trollope's growing interest in widows, aroused in The Bertrams, is evident in his next three novels. Each contains a widow as a major character. The three novels are a virtual unit, for two were written concurrently, with the third immediately following, all in slightly less than two years. In these novels, widows face an ethical dilemma in a specific problem situation (the typical Trollopian premise). The major widows of 1859-61 are handled with greater perception and sympathy than their predecessors, from whom they differ in five distinct ways:

1--Widows are major characters in themselves; they are the specific focus of attention. They are no longer mere plot devices; their own concerns are legitimate material for the novel. In addition, they serve to precipitate action and also, with a single exception, are involved in the young-love story.

2--These widows are inclined to be relatively complicated and rather aggressive. Their problems are not minor and are, to a large extent, self-created.

The problems are clearly connected with widowhood and resolution requires self-sacrifice and submission.

3--The major widows in these novels are serious, rather than comic characters. One widow has mildly comic attributes which do not entirely detract from the serious characterization.

4--The earlier stereotypes of widowed mother and young widow break down. The widows in the Middle Period, Part One are all widowed mothers, but their benevolence is not unalloyed.

5--The three major widows at this stage possess titles, which bring into consideration the further complications of rank, social status, and snobbery.

Robert Lifton has set up a hypothesis of three basic distinctions in women's roles: the nurturer, the temptress, and the knower.[1] These categories are useful in an examination of Trollopian widows of 1859-61. All three widows are nurturers, a role traditionally associated with motherhood. Two are temptresses, in the sense of psychological seduction. At least one is a knower, who embodies social wisdom.

Development of the widow. At this time, Trollope handles more complex widows with greater sensitivity than previously. Each of the three widows is involved in a progressively more

complicated situation. The first widow's outstanding emotional problems are further aggravated by poverty and rank. The second widow's self-expression requires the domination of all about her. The third widow is burdened with a more sophisticated combination of the problems of the other two.

Trollope's interest seems caught, at this point, by aggressive widows with obsessive and sensational problems: they are not exactly humdrum, ordinary creatures. Yet Trollope seems to suggest, here and later, that--to some extent--perhaps a degree of obsession may be endemic in the emotional make-up of many widows. He also makes other discoveries with social implications beyond the novels: that widows are emotionally and socially isolated, that this leads to emotional starvation or dependence, and that widows are usually poor.

The first of the three major widows is most isolated in every way; the second is least isolated; the third is self-isolated, and then destroyed when unable to maintain her seclusion. Each widow's problems are seen within the context of a progressively broader novel. Each is defeated in an attempt to control her children, and each displays self-abnegation in sacrificing herself for her children. Motherhood would receive conventional social approval during the nineteenth century as almost the only possibility upon which a widow might structure her life. Indeed, being a mother was almost the sole opportunity for

a widow to remain socially functional or viable. But Trollope shows that, contrary to the commonplaces, motherhood is insufficiently meaningful to fill a widow's life. Motherhood appears to be too limited in scope to absorb all of the widow's personal energies. Motherhood also seems too demanding, for a basic requirement is that her children's interests must always take precedence over the widow's personal desires.

A yearning for love. The Countess of Desmond, the most important character in one of the two plots of Castle Richmond (1859-60), is the first widow whose emotional difficulties are examined by Trollope. Lady Desmond is English, living in Ireland in an immense, decrepit house. Too poor to keep a carriage, she is ashamed and embittered by her poverty but exalted by her rank. She is the beautiful, coldly domineering mother (aged thirty-eight) of a daughter (seventeen) and a son (fifteen). Lady Desmond has never loved, and married her husband--a dissolute, elderly peer--out of ambition. Her emotional problem is a dramatic extreme: nothing less than a grand passion, with illicit overtones. For Lady Desmond's basic problem is that she falls disastrously in love with Owen Fitzgerald, the man (aged twenty-three) who asks for her daughter's hand. She rejects his offer not only because he is supposedly not affluent enough to marry an earl's penniless daughter, but

also because she hopes he will then turn to herself. Owen Fitzgerald is extremely attractive sexually.

> He was a very handsome man--tall, being somewhat over six feet in height--athletic, almost more than in proportion--with short, light chestnut-tinted hair, blue eyes, and a mouth perfect as that of Phoebus. He was clever, too, though perhaps not educated as carefully as might have been: his speech was usually rapid, hearty, and short, and not seldom caustic and pointed.[2]

The true climax of the novel is the scene in which the proud countess confesses her love to the completely impassive man.

In the novel, Lady Desmond is placed in a conflict between her duties as nuturer to her children and her compulsion as temptress to the man she loves. She eventually does sacrifice herself for her daughter. She suppresses her own wishes and approves the marriage to Fitgerald, once it is apparent that he is uninterested in her and when it seems he has become the heir to a substantial property. Lady Desmond is a mixture of passion and calculation. Were Fitzgerald to marry the daughter, perhaps there would be some obscure painful satisfaction for Lady Desmond, who would thus not lose him entirely. His new-found financial prospects would make him even more attractive to her. A superficially analogous situation exists in a novel published the same year as Castle Richmond. In Emily Eden's The Semi-Attached Couple (1860), a character falls decorously in love with her future son-in-law; but the situation is seen as comic and no deep feelings are involved. Lady

Desmond's renunciation is in vain, however, for her daughter has become engaged--at her mother's earlier insistence--to someone else and now refuses to break the betrothal.

Lady Desmond's problem seems to be how to handle her love for Owen Fitzgerald. However, her infatuation proceeds from a deeper problem--her lovelessness and lack of attachment to any other person, which has turned her into the hard, cold character she is. Aside from her love for Fitzgerald, Lady Desmond has only two concerns that matter to her: the glory of being a countess and the torment of being poor. Emotionally, she had found no love in marriage or elsewhere. Love for her children is not one of the important factors in her life; she is cool to them and manipulative. In dealing with her daughter, it never seems to cross Lady Desmond's mind to consider her daughter's best interests or wishes. Her reason for refusing the daughter's hand to Fitzgerald was specious; while he does not have a large income, it is adequate to support a wife. Lady Desmond's social isolation is largely of her own making. There are few callers at Desmond Court, even though there are affable Irish gentry in the neighborhood, for she is too English and too stiff. Irish visitors would not be as embarrassed as she is by her poverty, but she cannot but be aware that her poverty makes a mockery of her rank.

How Lady Desmond could solve the difficulty of her detachment from other people is unclear. A widow and a foreigner living in the remote countryside of a strange and (to her) unsympathetic place, she is too poor to go elsewhere to live. Complicating matters is the title which elevates her socially, but raises further barriers to human contact. The character is left with no option but to endure; her own previous choice for a grand, loveless marriage has placed her in the position in which she finds herself. Lady Desmond's emotional and social isolation has made her vulnerable to an emotion which she has never known and which her careful calculation is unable to control. She is obsessed with Owen Fitzgerald.

While any possible resolution of her loveless state remains unclear, Lady Desmond's ethical choice in dealing with Fitzgerald's love for her daughter is entirely evident: she should have immediately consented to their marriage. This could have been done, however, only by demolishing her own personal expectations. In theory, as a widowed mother, she should have had no expectations; in actuality, she finds she has none. At the novel's end, she is completely alone, for her daughter has married and her son has gone off traveling for two years with Owen Fitzgerald. Robert Polhemus believes that after Fitzgerald is refused the daughter's hand he enters into a homosexual relationship with the young earl, whom he regards as a

surrogate for his sister.[3] Trollope does not, understandably, explore the incestuous implications of a situation less decorous than that in Henry Esmond, but he was aware of its similarity to Esmond.[4]

Lady Desmond is a compelling, if somewhat unattractive, character handled by Trollope with dignity and relative objectivity. He displays very little of the overt sympathy he is later able to extend to characters who commit various kinds of moral irregularities. While Trollope does not denounce or deplore the character, neither does he sensationalize an implicitly sensational situation. Instead, he deliberately mutes Lady Desmond's dilemma. The reader knows of her love, but the only character who learns of it is Owen Fitzgerald, near the close of the novel. Lady Desmond is a complex character in a relatively simple novel. Even though its atmosphere is one of controlled melodrama, the values of Castle Richmond and the other characters are wholly conventional. Lady Desmond has something of the vitality and malevolence of Amneris in Aida; the comparison is not so far-fetched, for the novel has more than a touch of the operatic about it. The novel's last sentence shows that, despite what has occurred, Lady Desmond's love still endures: "But there is yet one left who thinks of him [Fitzgerald], hoping she may yet see him before she dies."[5] Sadleir thinks that perhaps "the Countess of Desmond is the first of the tragic, passionate ladies whose sad procession winds through the important later stories."[6]

There is no doubt that Lady Desmond violates some of the most basic conventions governing the behavior and standards of women. The character is hard, mercenary, and passionate. She shows little sympathy or interest in anyone but herself, is preoccupied by the thought of money, and does not even try to resist an immoderate and unreciprocated sexual love. In addition, she is a bad mother who fails to place her children's wishes before her own. Lady Desmond never forgives her daughter for failing to marry Owen Fitzgerald when the way has been made clear to do so; the daughter feels for her mother little more than mingled fear and dislike. Lady Desmond's mistreatment of her daughter and their embittered estrangement is the prototype of a mother-daughter relationship that Trollope will use many times in subsequent novels. The decorous schemes about the nature and place of women, set forth by Tennyson, Patmore, and Ruskin make no allowance for a woman such as Lady Desmond. A Lady Desmond would not fit the idealization of women adopted as a mid-Victorian social belief; therefore, the existence of such a woman either could not be acknowledged or, if it were, would be recognized as a scandalous departure from the norm. Respectable members of society might ascribe Lady Desmond's aberrant behavior to the fact that she was not ruled by any man. Certainly, contemporary reviewers of the novel found Lady Desmond monstrous and detestable.[7] Trollope himself was less

severe and later recalled the character in his autobiography as "strong [but] almost revolting."[8] Trollope's first attempt at portraying a widow's emotional problems results in an unorthodox and startling character. Having created Lady Desmond, Trollope does not seem to know exactly what to do with her. She interacts with few other characters, so that her difficulties have limited relevance or reverberation within her fictional world.

A yearning for power. If Trollope's first major widow represents an extreme emotional case, his next--Lady Lufton--is by contrast an ordinary character set within the context of more conventional emotions of family life. Lady Lufton is a pivotal character in two of the three plots in Framley Parsonage (1859-60). She is not so much a principal as is Lady Desmond, but instead, is an instigator and receiver of action by other characters. She is nearly the opposite of Lady Desmond, for she is irretrievably middle-aged (fifty) and unromantic. Furthermore, she is wealthy (a fact noted as unusual), loves her children, and has had a happy marriage.

Lady Lufton's problem is that she is a masterful woman accustomed to rule those about her. She has long arranged matters to her own satisfaction and had made numerous decisions affecting other people's futures and happiness. She selects Mark Robarts to become her son's best friend, and then determines that he shall be the next vicar of

her parish; when the elderly incumbent dies, Robarts is installed and, thus, beholden to Lady Lufton. But she does not approve of clerical celibacy and chooses a suitable wife for him, a dear friend of her daughter's. Lady Lufton had previously chosen a husband for her daughter. In all these cases, she had not pressured anyone but merely dangled before them attractive possibilities selected by herself. Lady Lufton's manipulations are not cold-blooded, for she has always in mind the best interest of those she wishes to assist. Very often, too, her judgments are correct. But the widow semi-consciously recognizes that when she binds others to her by obligation, she thereby makes certain that her own wishes will always prevail. To resist her is ungrateful. The difficulties that arise when her son and her vicar rebel against her autocracy are essentially family disputes and, according to Cockshut, "Trollope saw family relationships as a series of immeasurable and unpayable debts."[9]

Lady Lufton's dispute with the vicar is simpler, more open and more rancorous than her problem with her son. The patroness-protégé relationship seems to demand constant gratitude on the part of the protégé. In the context of Framley Parsonage, this entails Lady Lufton's having complete control over all parish business and nearly equal sway over the Robartses' personal affairs. This obsession for power has some similarity to Mrs. Wilkinson in The Bertrams

and to Mrs. Proudie (whom Lady Lufton knows and despises). The relations between Lady Lufton on one side, and the vicar and his wife on the other, are reminiscent of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and the Collinses in Pride and Prejudice. But Lady Lufton is not stupid or a bore, nor are the Robartses servile.

Mark Robarts grows restive under Lady Lufton's authority and, perhaps his sense of his own manhood smarts by constant subjection to her. He seeks new friends with political influence who may aid his ambition to be more than a country clergyman. Unfortunately, this is the very set of people that Lady Lufton regards as most dangerous politically and socially. The vicar finds this to be true, but only after he has openly defied Lady Lufton and has put himself into debt.

Lady Lufton eventually makes her peace with Robarts--after he has learned his lesson and has been extricated from debt--at the express wish of her son. Whether the character grasps the motives behind Robarts' activities is questionable, but she is at least induced not to mention his misdeeds again. This conclusion, however, fits Lady Lufton's character, for she is not mean or vindictive. By nature she is generous and loving (even if overpowering) and is made miserable by any estrangement from those around her. She is fond of Mark Robarts and is even more attached to his wife, who, as nearly a foster-daughter to Lady Lufton, is placed in an untenable situation by the breach between them. Lady Lufton is dependent, emotionally and socially, on her family and those immediately about her. She is not a recluse, but

rarely wishes to see anyone beyond her usual circle. As a widow she is not so much isolated as she is restricted.

Lady Lufton's difficulty with her son (aged twenty-six) is more subtle than her row with the vicar. She wishes Lord Lufton to marry a girl she has approved as his bride. He fails to propose because his mother's protégée, Miss Grantly, is a lovely statue lacking any warmth or conversation and also because he has fallen in love with another girl. His unapproved choice is none other than the errant vicar's dowerless and plain sister, Lucy Robarts. Lady Lufton's perception is flawed, for she cannot comprehend why her son might prefer Lucy, who is both warm and intelligent. While Lady Lufton eventually begins to have misgivings about how satisfactory a wife Miss Grantly might make, she does not abandon the idea until her son tells her flatly that he will not offer for the girl.

Cockshut finds relations between Ludy Lufton and her son to be distinctly equivocal, and rather more complex than is first apparent.

> Lady Lufton is regarded by everybody as the ruling spirit of Framley, and is treated by her son . . . with a respect which fathers never receive [in Trollope]. Both realise, however, that he is the stronger; she is interfering because she recognises his strength, he is generally submissive because he knows he can prevail whenever he is determined.[10]

It is undoubtedly true that Lord Lufton puts an end to his mother's quarrel with Mark Robarts and also to her scheme that he should marry Miss Grantly. Cockshut believes that Lady Lufton finally accepts the projected marriage because

Lucy Robarts insists on her consent, thus placing the son's future happiness in his mother's hands.[11]

Lady Lufton is a serious character with comic overtones. Her desire for power and the difficulties this creates are serious enough. But her social and political outlook is very conservative and is sufficiently exaggerated to be mildly comic. The Tory Lady Lufton, it appears, would not be surprised to learn that the great Whig magnate, the Duke of Omnium, was the possessor of a cloven hoof. These biases, while irrational and unrealistic, are seen in the novel as allowing the character somehow to arrive at instinctively accurate positions: she is a knower. The comic side of Lady Lufton is, perhaps, necessary to the novel for it softens and makes endearing a character that might otherwise appear too harsh of selfish. Framley Parsonage is a quintessential Barsetshire novel--sunny, pleasant, ending with wedding bells. Any real examination of the conflict between Lady Lufton and the vicar or Lady Lufton and her son would be out of keeping with the golden fairy-tale aura of the novel.

Lady Lufton's problems become minor because these are not methodically explored, due to the nature of the story. This is not to say that her internal problems are not real or serious; similar problems will be seriously considered elsewhere and later in Trollope. Instead of emphasizing her destructive potential--to herself and others--Trollope prefers to stress Lady Lufton's role as a nurturer, her kindness and generosity. It is not entirely clear how

self-aware the widow finally becomes. Most evident is the truth of J. Hillis Miller's assertion that "The characters in Trollope's novels . . . attain in the end a more or less complete identification with the collective wisdom of the community."[12] In other words, Lady Lufton assents to and recognizes that which the other characters, the narrator, and the reader have long known to be true. Her self-sacrifice requires nothing more painful than an admission of error and a small bruise to her vanity. Lady Lufton is a complex character simplified to meet the needs of the novel. Trollope raises problems significant for a widow at the beginning of the novel; ultimately, he fails to take these seriously or to submit them to meaningful scrutiny. Lady Lufton's yearning for power is transmuted, instead, into an endearing quirk of character, a mere bossiness. At the novel's end, Lady Lufton is still running things at Framley (where her son and his bride have come to live), but her taste for power has become a harmless fussing.

Lady Lufton may be measured against the prevalent concepts about women's nature in either of two ways. From the conservative viewpoint, the character may be seen as a woman typically lacking self-control and moderation, sadly in need of a husband's restraint, which is finally exercised by a sensible and firm man, her son. From the liberal viewpoint, Lady Lufton may be seen as the equal (or perhaps the superior) of any male character in the novel. Her competence is unquestioned; she manages all of her son's

business affairs. The character's domineering qualities might then be attributed to the inevitable result of confining her to a smaller sphere than her capacity warrants.

A yearning for stability. The third major widow, Lady Mason, fills and dominates Orley Farm (1860-61), Trollope's longest and most ambitious novel to date. Lady Mason is a major participant in two of the novel's five plots and is a chief topic of conversation in the other three. Lady Mason is more complex than either Lady Desmond or Lady Lufton, and her problems are set within the context of extraordinary, sensational legal proceedings. She is about to be tried for perjury, a crime of which she is guilty.

Lady Mason is middle-aged (forty-seven), the mother of a son (twenty-two), and has been a widow for twenty years. As a girl she had married, without love, an elderly knight who was her father's former business partner. A child was born, but the wealthy Sir Joseph Mason refused to make any financial provision for him, preferring instead to leave everything to a grown-up son who had already been provided with a fortune. Lady Mason forges a codicil to her husband's will, leaving the small estate of Orley Farm to her son. After her husband's death, the stepson has her brought to trial on a charge of forgery, but she is acquitted. Now, twenty years later, new evidence brought to the stepson indicates that Lady Mason swore falsely to having watched witnesses sign the codicil.

The legal hazards of the impending perjury charge present personal problems to the character. In order to strengthen her position, and to provide herself with necessary social countenance, Lady Mason ingratiates herself with Sir Peregrine Orme, the most prominent local landowner. Taken with her loveliness and her plight, convinced of her innocence, the elderly baronet falls in love with Lady Mason and asks her to be his wife. She demurs, then accepts him. Her original cool calculation does not long survive close acquaintance with him, for Sir Peregrine is a delightful man of great integrity and simplicity. Lady Mason seems to weaken as she learns to love him and to recognize the stability Sir Peregrine represents--a protective love, an assured social status, an honesty which she has never known.

Lady Mason is undone by love, overcome, and virtually destroyed by her own instincts as a nurturer. In the act of forgery, she was driven by a fierce maternal love and a conviction of injustice. In her engagement to Sir Peregrine, she yields to her own personal desires but is eventually forced, from a sense of justice and from love, to confess the truth to him, so that he will not be dragged down in her disgrace. The engagement is at an end; she has only made herself more miserable, while the old baronet slowly and quietly loses his interest in living. The moral choice Lady Mason should have made in the two situations is clear

enough. She should not have forged the codicil and should not have permitted the engagement; ironically, she causes the downfall of her son and of her lover. What Lady Mason should do, as a guilty person confronted with trial, is ethically more ambiguous. While she does not much care any longer about herself, she is determined to fight for an acquittal to save her son's name. Lady Mason has never sought anything for herself, aside from the brief interlude with Sir Peregrine; she has never expected any personal happiness.

This selfless quality about Lady Mason permits Trollope to indulge fully the moral relativism for which he is famous. "His concern is always moral, and he is always recommending, by means of his cases, a more flexible morality. His stance is that of what we now call Situation Ethics. . . ."[13] Trollope often concedes that a character has been guilty of wrong-doing, but does not minimize the seriousness of the sin involved. However, he refuses to condemn the sinner out of hand; usually he presents the character sympathetically, as a weak person driven by extreme pressure (or by faulty perception) to serious misjudgment. In Orley Farm, the sympathetic qualities of Lady Mason and her supporters do not justify her forgery; nor do the unattractive aspects of her enemies alter the correctness of their position. Nevertheless, extenuating circumstances mitigate the severity of judgment on Lady Mason.

As Bradford Booth notes, Trollope's handling of Lady Mason lacks consistency. Not until the latter part of the novel is his sympathy fully established and expressed; earlier, "he is careful to take the conventional ethical point of view."[14] The turning point seems to be Lady Mason's confession to Sir Peregrine Orme at the end of Chapter 44. A case could almost be made that the exposition of her character really begins here and continues to the end of the novel (through Chapter 80). Before the disclosure of guilt, Lady Mason's reserve and calculation are the character's most apparent, and not overly attractive, qualities. Afterward, the immediate and continuing revelation of her internal anguish makes the character pitiable and sympathetic. A contemporary reviewer, Richard Holt Hutton, noticed the inconsistency and attributed this to Trollope's initial indecisiveness as to the extent to which guilt might have undermined the character's good qualities.[15] Trollope becomes interested, I think, in Lady Mason's forgery as a sin rather than as a crime. The illegality that preoccupies so many of the novel's characters seems less important than the internal destructive effect of the sin upon the sinner. A recent critic has affirmed the necessity of Lady Mason's confession, for this marks her "release from the shackles of artifice and dishonesty. Having made her confession, she is on the way to becoming whole."[16]

After Lady Mason's admission, she slowly rids herself of the pent-up bitter emotions of twenty years. Her foil and confidante is a "good" widow, Sir Peregrine's daughter-in-law, Mrs. Orme, a mild and soft woman who has lived a conventional life without stress or temptation. Lady Mason has never before been frank with anyone, so Mrs. Orme is confounded by her pain and her initial lack of penitence for the forgery. What makes Mrs. Orme quail, however, is a sense of Lady Mason's harsh and lonely strength, her calm ability to bear her burdens unassisted for so many years. The source of Lady Mason's strength has been maternal love. Because of this, the relations between mother and son are crucial to give meaning to her self-sacrifice. The son, however, is not only unworthy of his mother's exertions, but adds appreciably to her torment. Henry James aptly describes the son as "a young prig who doesn't appreciate immoral heroism."[17] And it was her son who, in unheeding arrogance and contrary to her advice, set Lady Mason's destruction in train. He dispossessed a long-time minor tenant, who angrily blamed Lady Mason and, for revenge, brought forth new evidence to support the perjury charge.

Lady Mason's problems are more crushing and more publicly shameful than those of any Trollope widow until this time. Whether those problems are fully resolved seems questionable; whatever the indicated solution, Lady Mason is called upon to endure futher personal pain. She is

trapped by a past that dominates the present and future. Although the character escapes the harshest potential consequence of her forgery--imprisonment--her name and prospects are not restored by her acquittal. "Non-proven" would express more accurately the sense of the jury's "not guilty." Furthermore, all lawyers in the case and most of the other characters are convinced of her guilt, despite the verdict. After the trial, she and her son feel compelled to leave England permanently, first for Germany, then for Australia. On the personal level, Lady Mason's crime, or sin, has poisoned her life. She has lived deliberately almost as a recluse for twenty years, evidently believing this to be the most defensive position. Only the impending trial flushes her out of her self-imposed isolation, for she is not strong enough to handle the situation without substantial help. One of Lady Mason's main difficulties is her lack of repentance for what she had done. Her crime against property rights would, undoubtedly, be regarded as more horrifying by the mid-Victorian middle class than it would be today. Yet only by the exertions of Mrs. Orme and the reactions of Sir Peregrine is Lady Mason brought to realize that her act, which she saw as remedying an injustice, caused her to commit a further injustice. Inherent in this new consciousness is Lady Mason's own background, which offers some extenuation of her act: she is not actually a lady. As the daughter of a bankrupt

commercial family, she had been raised to consider important only money and material possessions. Her renunciation of this attitude and concession of her act as unjust is signaled in the voluntary surrender of the Orley Fram property to her stepson.

Lady Mason has submerged herself completely in the role of mother. But in so doing, she has precluded any personal life or happiness of her own, as apart from her son. But the object of her enduring maternal love is not worth all the sacrifice and self-abnegation. Despite what she has done for him, mother and son are not close nor, on his side, particularly affectionate. Her secret seems to have created a distance between them, a careful reserve on her part. At the same time, her overwhelming love has created, instead of a man, a spoiled and self-centered boy accustomed to an unhealthy deference from his mother. Lady Mason is not the last Trollope widow to lavish affection on an ungrateful, foolish son; nor is Lucius Mason the most worthless son so idolized. One unorthodox point clearly emerges from Lady Mason's imbroglio: that the role of mother, followed blindly and irrationally, can destroy a woman. As a widow, however, the character is denied any other focus for her affection or energy.

Lucius Mason is estranged from his mother principally because she will not accept, as he does, the conservative viewpoint on women's nature. Had she done so, she would

have admitted her inferiority and incompetence as a woman and automatically placed herself under his direction as her natural (male) superior. A proponent such as Lucius Mason makes the conservative position untenable; not only is he stupid and imperceptive, but his mother is obviously his superior in all ways. The conservative attitude about women appears to have governed Lady Mason's unhappy marriage to a much older man, which seems to have been more a master-servant relationship than anything else. This may partly explain why she has never previously been interested in marrying again. With Sir Peregrine Orme, however, she can visualize another kind of marriage, closer to the moderate viewpoint, with husband wife as complementary. That this second marriage would and have some flavor of a father-daughter relationship is evident; but if so, this would offer a paternal indulgence and kindness that Lady Mason has never experienced.

At the novel's end, Lady Mason is sent into exile with her hostile son to a life, presumably, of perpetual repentance and reproach. Even this penalty does not outweigh the relief of being free of the heavier secret burden.

Conclusions. The widows of 1859-61 represent a clearly-defined advance in the evolution of the character type. Most of their predecessors remained relatively minor characters in the novels, acting as accessories to the courtship stories or providing comic relief (and sometimes both).

Their problems were superficial or external to themselves. In contrast, the present widows are major characters that dominate much of the novels' action; for the most part they are serious rather than comic characters. Their own stories are substantial enough to be the chief attraction in the novels and their problems are both serious and internal. In addition, the problems are perceived as closely related to widowhood.

Trollope focuses here, for the first time, on the dramatic possibilities of a widow's situation and seems aware--as he had not been previously--that widows have genuine problems which grow out of their ambiguous social and emotional status. The three widows are more isolated than earlier widows and their relations with their children more equivocal. Trollope now seems conscious that widowed mothers do not always behave wisely or well toward their children. Lady Desmond, Lady Lufton, and Lady Mason are concerned with power and love, a volatile combination. In each case the power is exercised wrongly and vainly; the love is blind or mistaken.

Lady Desmond is Trollope's first serious examination of a widow's emotional life and he discovers in her the artistic potential of maternal selfishness. Lady Lufton's selfishness is more broadly based and masquerades as altruism. But so truly altruistic is Lady Mason that her selflessness becomes self-abnegation.

While the three widows document Trollope's awakening sensitivity, his handling of the topic is as yet tentative and uncertain. From a technical standpoint the widows are defective. Their interior lives are only fitfully revealed and they are not well-integrated into the novels. Lady Desmond remains secluded with her secret and has very limited interaction with the other characters. The problems raised with Lady Lufton are abruptly abandoned, without resolution. Lady Mason is treated unfavorably in the first half of the novel and favorably in the remainder.

Trollope's perception of these widows still ties them closely to motherhood as the single most important and conventional value. Only with Lady Mason and her son is the possibility raised that motherhood cannot, or should not, confer the ultimate meaning on a woman's existence. Although the maternal role is so important to these widows, one significant omission reveals Trollope's relative inexperience in portraying the mother-child relationship. Each widow seems somewhat formal and remote from her children; little intimacy exists between mother and child, with the potential for mutual pain and enlightenment this might afford. Lady Desmond, Lady Lufton, and Lady Mason are provided by their creator with exceptional circumstances--a virtually illicit love, a domestic dictatorship, a trial for perjury--that are unlikely to illuminate the plight of more mundane widows.

Trollope's next group of widows shows a surer touch. They are more closely integrated in their fictional world; their emotional and social circumstances are more within the range of ordinary life and are more carefully explored. Trollope examines young widows in greater depth than before and also finds more subtlety in the role of widowed mother. Lady Mason's voluntary self-sacrifice for her son seems to lead Trollope to widows who are involuntarily sacrificed by their children.

## Notes

[1]Robert J. Lifton, "Woman as Knower: Some Psychohistorical Perspectives," in The Woman in America, ed. Robert Jay Lifton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965). The archetypes are useful only at this stage in the development of the widow and are inapplicable to later, more complex widows.

[2]Castle Richmond (London: Ward, Lock, n.d.), p. 8.

[3]Polhemus, p. 64.

[4]An Autobiography, p. 134.

[5]Castle Richmond, p. 440.

[6]Sadleir, p. 387.

[7]Skilton, pp. 22-3, 65.

[8]An Autobiography, pp. 134-5.

[9]Cockshut, p. 57.

[10]Cockshut, p. 56.

[11]Cockshut, pp. 56-7.

[12]J. Hillis Miller, The Form of Victorian Fiction (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 117.

[13]apRoberts, p. 52.

[14]Bradford Booth, "Trollope's Orley Farm: Artistry Manqué," in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad: Essays Collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 153.

[15]Review of Orley Farm in Spectator, 33 (11 October 1862), 1136-38, reprinted in Anthony Trollope: The Critical Heritage, ed. Donald Smalley (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 149. Smalley does not identify the author of the unsigned review, but David Skilton (Anthony Trollope and His Contemporaries p. 26) accepts Hutton as the author on the basis of an attribution by R. H. Tener, "A Clue to Some R. H. Hutton Attributions," Notes and Queries N.S. 14 (October, 1967), 382-3.

[16]Roger L. Slakey, "Trollope's Case for a Moral Imperative," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 28, No. 3 (December, 1973), 308.

[17]"Anthony Trollope," in The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel by Henry James, ed. Leon Edel, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 111.

## CHAPTER IV

## TROLLOPE'S WIDOWS: THE MIDDLE PERIOD, PART TWO (1862-64)

After completing Orley Farm, Trollope did not concern himself with widows for about a year. During this interlude, he began no new fiction. Instead, he completed an extremely minor novel put aside some years earlier (The Struggles of Brown, Jones & Robinson), visited the United States, and wrote North America. When Trollope resumed his more typical writing schedule--producing one novel after another--his continuing interest in widows is manifest. The manner in which these are handled and the nature of their problems are different from their predecessors. The difficulties these latest widows face are less dramatic, within the ordinary emotional range of every-day experience. The characters perhaps represent more authentic observation and appraisal of widows' emotional and social dilemmas than was earlier the case. The widows of 1862-64 demonstrate Trollope's increasing awareness of the particular painfulness of family life that lacks a husband and father. The widows differ in six ways from those of the previous stage:

1--Most widows are major characters, yet do not dominate the action of the novel. Their concerns

remain legitimate to the story, but are not necessarily central.

2--These widows are relatively complicated and no generalization about their responses to their problems is possible. Their various individual reactions, whether aggressive or passive, are determined by the differing personalities and situations created for them.

3--Although the widows are all serious characters, Trollope shows considerable adeptness at using the comic to illuminate serious matters. This is true of at least two widows.

4--Trollope, at this stage, carries the benevolent widowed mother stereotype as far as he can, then begins to show widows in less restrictive situations, as bad widowed mothers, as unpleasant young widows, as childless widows.

5--Grown children tend to sacrifice the widowed mother's interests in favor of their own wishes. Previously, the widowed mother did this on her own initiative.

6--The ordinary world and lives of the widows of 1862-64 are uglier and more public than those of earlier widows.

Six widows will be examined in Chapter IV; four are major characters, while the two others are significant though minor. Two are widowed mothers; two are older

women who act as mother-surrogates to younger women; two are childless, moneyed versions of the young widow.

Development of the widow. Trollope now enlarges the world in which his widows operate. Prior to this time, widows were depicted almost entirely within the setting of their homes, for they made few forays into the larger society beyond that of family and neighbors. Even Lady Mason's actual contact with the world, for all her notoriety, was fleeting and involuntary, not much more than a few visits to a lawyer's office and attendance at her trial. Trollopian widows are now seen not only within the domestic circle, but also within a somewhat wider social structure. This permits Trollope to show pressures upon them from family and from society. Because of the enlarged social context--initially not much beyond village society--it becomes possible to assess the evaluation placed on widows and widowhood within the social world they inhabit.

This wider scope is assisted by the development of other kinds of widows beyond the basic norm of the benevolent widowed mother confined to the home. The young widow is revived, but is hardly so bland, innocent, or sweet as formerly. A widow's possession of money is also re-examined, but with more serious intent than previously, as a means to study its effect on her character, position, and prospects. Trollope broadens his gallery of widows to appraise childless, poor widows. Perhaps most promising (dramatically and socially)

is the in-depth exploration of the bad widowed mother, a perversion of the conventionally approved feminine ideal.

The first major widow of 1862-64 is a "good" widowed mother, well-aware of the self-sacrifice she has made on her daughters' behalf. The second widowed mother is not really "bad" so much as incompetent and afraid of her daughters. One daughter is a young widow with some money of her own, a taste for domination, and an opportunity for re-marrying. The fourth widow, even more moneyed, is not so young and is poised between two ludicrous suitors. The fifth and sixth widows, minor and even older, attempt to act as duennas to young women who reject their values.

The "good" widowed mother. Mrs. Mary Dale in The Small House at Allington (1862-63) is the forty-year old mother of two daughters (nineteen and twenty-one). Ten years prior to the opening of the novel, she was invited by her late husband's brother to live rent-free in the dower house on his estate. She accepted the offer because it permitted her small income to be stretched further. Mrs. Dale was even more attracted by the benefit such an arrangement would confer upon her daughters: they live almost as their bachelor uncle's daughters, recipients of his treats and gifts. In addition, due to their close relationship to him, the Dale girls are placed on an equal social footing with County families, despite their very modest financial circumstances.

Although Mrs. Dale seemingly resembles Mrs. Dashwood

in Sense and Sensibility, her situation is far more complex. The single issue confronting Mrs. Dale is the conflict between her own honor and the duty she owes her children. Previous to the opening of the novel she had opted for duty. She is left to cope with the consequences of her decision, which fall into three areas: her relations with her brother-in-law, the actions of her daughters, and her own emotional soreness.

Mrs. Dale pays fully and bitterly for her daughters' position, in being a dependent of a brother-in-law whom she dislikes and who dislikes her. A contemporary critic regarded Mrs. Dale's tenancy of the Small House as the real subject of the novel, yielding importance only to the jilting of her younger daughter.[1] While her daughters are warmly welcome, their mother is not. Mrs. Dale knows that were it not for her daughters she would never have been offered the house; what the squire does not know is that she would have refused the house were it not for her daughters.

Mrs. Dale has accepted nothing for herself from her brother-in-law; while approving of his generosity to her daughters, she is jealous of his encroachment on her position and authority over them. It is finally due to her daughters that Mrs. Dale is brought to break off relations with their uncle. He has arranged a marriage between the elder girl and his heir, but the niece declines to marry her cousin. Affronted, the uncle demands the mother compel

her daughter; Mrs. Dale refuses, even though she likes the match. Their quarrel over this causes Mrs. Dale to begin packing to move. The daughters also make irreparable the breach between their mother and uncle. Even though Mrs. Dale has some second thoughts about the advisability of their moving from the Samll House, her daughters are so indignant at their uncle's interference that they will not permit Mrs. Dale to reconsider the decision. The uncle, with uncharacteristic humility, repeatedly begs her not to move, and, when the younger daughter falls dangerously ill, the plan is allowed to lapse.

The character does not have problems with her daughters, in a personal sense, for their mutual relations are affectionate and good. What Mrs. Dale experiences, however, is the unpleasant consequences of her daughters' actions, a painful personal distress at their decisions which she feels compelled to support without approving. Mrs. Dale reinforces the truism inherent in the situation of Lady Mason--that children are, more often than not, a source of more pain than joy.

Mrs. Dale's personal emotional problems she keeps to herself. Although she was widowed at the age of twenty-five and is still lovely, the possibility of re-marriage is never raised. She is very lonely and occasionally given to missing the husband she loved so much. She is aware that by coming to live in the rural village of Allington, she has

given up the chance of leading a life of her own. "The theory of her life [was] that she should bury herself in order that her daughters might live well above ground."[2] The character conceals from her daughters the extent of her self-sacrifice and dissatisfaction with her situation. She has no resentment towards them as the cause of her sacrifice, for Mrs. Dale never doubts the correctness of her action. But she is sometimes sad, and prone to thinking it might be better for her daughters if she were dead and out of the way, so that their uncle could adopt them and take them to live with him at the Big House. The widow Dale's picture of the future seems bleak enough. All she can realistically hope is that she can live with one or other of her daughters when they marry or, perhaps, live in a cottage nearby.

Mrs. Dale is extremely isolated emotionally and socially. She has no friends at all, no confidantes in the sparse society of Allington. Her brother-in-law's actions drive her even deeper into isolation and she has the further burden of being grateful to him for doing more than his duty by her daughters. Mrs. Dale's problems are inextricably entwined with her sense of responsibility, her loneliness, and her self-abnegation, her sheer helplessness to affect any issue.

At the close of the novel, there are few definite solutions in the three areas that trouble the character.

A reconciliation with her brother-in-law, together with a better and more appreciative mutual understanding, promises warmer future relations between them. With the daughters, one is to marry the local doctor--which relieves the mother's heart--while the other has become an irrevocable old maid, thus remaining a continued maternal sore point. Mrs. Dale's own personal problems and basic situation have shown little essential change.

There can be no doubt that Mrs. Dale has sacrificed herself--not so dramatically if, perhaps, more plausibly than Lady Mason--for her daughters. And she endures a dreary penance for doing so. The Dale girls intend no sacrifice of their mother but, unwittingly, their own self-absorption, natural though it may be, is completely oblivious of the effect their decisions may have on their mother's slender emotional resources.

Mrs. Dale's position, her own priorities, and the attitudes of those about her seem to show that a poor widow is of no value or interest in herself, except as an extension of her children. No one in the novel, save herself, is even aware that she is making any sacrifice, and she accepts this fact as both natural and inescapable. But Trollope makes plain that motherhood has not enough meaning to fill a widow's life, that commendable as her actions may be, her own needs are unmet and merit attention. His point is made quietly, for Mrs. Dale's problems, although visible,

tend to be obscured (except at the beginning) by those of her daughters.

Mrs. Dale does not fit easily into the conservative, moderate, or liberal beliefs about women's nature. Her living pattern is in accord with the conservative stance since she lives only for her children and she has placed them and herself under the protection of a male relative. But this is not done joyously or automatically, and she is resentful of male surperiority. The moderate attitude does not apply, since the character has no husband; it is implied, however, that her relations with her late husband were probably those of complementary partners. Mrs. Dale could be regarded as a suppression of the liberal idea of women, for she is obviously more intelligent than any other character in the novel.

With Mrs. Dale, Trollope closes any further development of the "good" or benevolent widowed mother. Subsequent, similar widows show no advance. Indeed, it is not difficult to see why Trollope can carry the concept any further: the type is self-limiting. The widowed mother set up in accordance with the ideal must invariably be passive, sympathetic to her children, self-sacrificing, and incapable of any independent interests or life of her own. Mrs. Dale resembles Mrs. Woodward of The Three Clerks (1857), but Trollope has provided her with an intelligence, a strength, and an embittered self-awareness that the earlier character lacks.

The "bad" widowed mother. If the portrayal of a "good" widowed mother requires conformity to a basically uniform ideal, a "bad" widowed mother is not so circumscribed, and may offer a somewhat wider range of behavior. Trollope's earliest "bad" widowed mother is Lady Desmond in Castle Richmond, but he barely touches upon her motherhood: Lady Desmond's children exist on the edge of their mother's interest, attention, or consciousness. The first relatively substantial investigation of this kind of widow begins with the character of Mrs. Ray in Rachel Ray (1863). This fortyish mother of two grown daughters is not "bad" in the sense of being cruel or neglectful, but because she is incompetent. The character is important in the story not only for her own problems but also since her personality defects cause basic conflicts in the novel.

Mrs. Ray's ostensible problems are with her two daughters. The younger is courted by a man the mother has doubts about; the elder strongly criticizes the mother's handling of the situation. But Mrs. Ray's real problem is the pressure set up between her own weakness of character and the authoritative decisiveness expected in the maternal role. Had Dora Spenlow lived to the same age and been widowed, she might have been much like Mrs. Ray. For Mrs. Ray has less than average intelligence, no self-awareness, and no common sense. She is confused and fearful much of the time.

If the character misses her husband--dead at least fifteen years--it is because he told her what to do and made all the decisions. Mrs. Ray instinctively responds to any stronger-willed person, whose judgments on her difficulties she tends to accept with a sense of relief that is later assailed by doubt. In short, responsibility haunts her, however much she seeks to evade it.

The decision-maker closest to Mrs. Ray at the outset of the novel is her disagreeable elder daughter, Dorothea (a young widow, to be examined next), who makes the mother's life miserable. As a fervent Evangelical of the kind Trollope detested, Dorothea leads Mrs. Ray to an extreme fearfulness of sin. With regard to young men, Dorothea's influence is even more dire. Although Mrs. Ray likes to hear of girls getting married, she is terrified by courtship and looks upon a young man as a potential seducer; while her reasoning is not explicitly stated, this is the apparent cause of her fear. When her younger daughter, Rachel, is courted, Mrs. Ray is almost hysterical with dismay. Yet when Dorothea demands that the mother dismiss the young man, and the sisters quarrel over this, Mrs. Ray wavers between a desire to obey and a doubt about tampering with Rachel's chances for happiness. After all, suitable young men are not easily come by in their small West Country town.

Her fears, her solicitude for the younger daughter, her own indecisiveness--all combine to prevent Mrs. Ray from driving the suitor off. The older daughter, prophesying her sister will become a "castaway" or fallen woman, in protest moves out of the cottage the three women share. Although Mrs. Ray cannot nerve herself to do what Dorothea demands, the weakness of her nature allows her neither to question Dorothea's judgment nor to tell Dorothea to mind her own business. Since she believes Dorothea is probably correct and that Rachel's future happiness is possibly at stake, Mrs. Ray spends much of the novel in a near-constant state of anxiety.

If the older daughter scolds and frightens her mother unceasingly, the younger soothes and cossets Mrs. Ray. Rachel knows that if she had her mother to herself she could have her way in whatever she wished. A reversal of roles seems to take place between Mrs. Ray and her daughters: they are the adults and she the child. She responds in fear and submission, as a bad child, to the one and with the happy contentment of a good child to the other. In their deepening hostility to each other, she becomes a pawn, much as a child might between contending parents.

Because of self-doubt, mingled with a wish to place responsibility on other shoulders and the need for a decision unassailable by her daughters, Mrs. Ray takes two key matters to her minister for his determination. His

religious standing and the fact that he is a man equip him, in her eyes, with an aura of infallibility. The character thus relieves herself of a painful duty and, subsequently, can enjoy the luxury of criticizing the decision without any self-blame. The first problem is an invitation for Rachel to attend a ball (undoubtedly sinful). To Mrs. Ray's surprise, the minister approves the invitation and arranges that his daughter take Rachel. Trollope points out that the widow is unable to perceive the difference between the harshness and rigid virtue this Low-Church minister preaches and the easy-going comfort of his private life. Rachel becomes engaged as a result of the ball, so the decision seems justified. Later, after her fiancé has gone away for a while, he writes Rachel a love letter. By this time, however, rumors are abroad that he has behaved scandalously to other people and also has left many unpaid debts behind him. Mrs. Ray takes the problem of how the letter should be answered to her minister, who decides that a cool and restrained reply should be made, forbidding further correspondence until the young man's reputation is cleared. Rachel does as she is told, under strong protest, and the young man is not heard from again. Rachel becomes quieter and thinner; her mother is effectively punished by a cessation of affectionate concern. Mrs. Ray even becomes afraid of her now-stern younger daughter.

By letting someone else make important decisions, Mrs. Ray fails to develop self-confidence or any awareness that her own instincts have generally been correct. While her initial reaction to any new disclosure is horrified repugnance, this is usually followed by a more accurate assessment. Her early fear of the suitor is allayed by the discovery, when she meets him, that he is pleasant and a gentleman. Left to herself, the mother would have let Rachel go to the ball because she obviously wished to. Mrs. Ray's second thoughts about responding to the letter are to leave the answer to Rachel's discretion. However, the character is so entirely credulous of another person's appraisal that she never trusts her own. At the novel's close, the rumors are proved false, the young man returns, renews his suit, and is accepted.

Mrs. Ray is not only instrumental as a narrative device in the young-love plot, but is its chief interest and novelty; Rachel and her suitor are pallid replicas of other suffering young maidens and feckless young men commonly found in Trollope. Had Mrs. Ray behaved as she ought--as a "good" widowed mother--there would have been little or no story. She would have silenced her elder daughter, would have acted wisely in small matters, and the engagement of the younger daughter would have proceeded relatively smoothly. How Mrs. Ray should have behaved is clear enough. But, given the qualities with which the character is

endowed, it is difficult to conceive of her behaving in so intelligent and admirable a way. The moral ambiguity of ethical choices does not apply in Mrs. Ray's case, for her irreparable defects are the omission of such basics as minimal common sense and strength of mind.

Were it not that Trollope makes Mrs. Ray a comic character, she might well be contemptible. Instead, the reader is brought to smile at her confusion, her silliness, her childishness, her lack of proportion. Mrs. Ray also remains a comic figure because the problems so intimidating to her are neither major nor tragic. The comedy that envelops Mrs. Ray does not conceal the bleakness of her situation as a widow. Mrs. Ray is the kind of widow deplored by Mary Wollstonecraft: a woman so formed in the traditionally approved mode of wifely dependence and passivity that when her authority-figure husband dies, she is incapable of making her own sound judgments.[3] Mrs. Ray perfectly illustrates the shortcomings of the conservative view of women's nature; however valid this attitude may have been in a wife, it is insufficient armor for a woman deprived of her husband. This widow also has no emotional tie except to her daughters, but this brings little satisfaction and much disquiet.

Trollope perceives the widow's equivocal status. Mrs. Ray is a lady but she is poor; her cottage, set a little way out of the town, might well signify her position in society. She has virtually no social life and lives apart,

nearly a recluse, from any level of town society;[4] Prosperous tradespeople, her inferiors, look down upon her. It is apparent that Mrs. Ray suffers socially in having no man to confer status upon her. Unlike Mrs. Dale, she has no squire to provide social countenance for herself and her daughters.

Trollope's first in-depth attempt at a "bad" widowed mother begins with a character neither ill-tempered or selfish, but one who is kindly and generous. Her main negative facet is that she is inadequate to the demands of the role. Motherhood offers little satisfaction and much anxiety; Mrs. Ray is aware that her daughters are burdens. With Mrs. Ray, Trollope has the germ of the basic psychological situation for all his future "bad" widowed mothers: a woman with the authority to make decisions, decides wrongly for herself and her children.

The young and/or moneyed widow. Trollope breaks new ground when he discovers that if a widow has money, this radically affects her self-image and general social desirability. The few earlier widows in comfortable circumstances had little distinct awareness of their money; although Eleanor Bold's fortune increased her attractiveness to suitors, she seemed oblivious to the fact. But Dorothea Prime, Mrs. Ray's late-twentyish elder daughter, is entirely different. Mrs. Prime is no Eleanor Bold--sweet, naive, well-dowered.

Instead, she is sour, dictatorial, and the possessor of a small, carefully husbanded income (£200 a year). Mrs. Prime is a major character in the main young-love story of Rachel Ray (1863), and in the smaller sub-plot concerning her own re-marriage.

To Mrs. Prime, money is power. In the modest sphere in which she moves, her small fortune inspires respect, within and without the home. Since she lives with her mother and shares expenses, she feels that this permits her to set the tone and rules for the household. What she insists upon is complete submission to her own strict Evangelical beliefs, in which sin is omni-present and in which small pleasures must (necessarily) be abandoned. Mrs. Prime seems to envision herself as the relentless moral arbiter in a domestic theocracy. Her dominion as family tyrant fails, even though she successfully intimidates the mother, because her sister resists her edicts and prevents their mother's complete submission to these. Mrs. Prime's quarrel is with the sister, not the mother. When Mrs. Prime moves out of the cottage--after Mrs. Ray refuses to dismiss Rachel's suitor--she is thus applying financial, as well as moral, pressure because her contribution to the family budget then ceases. However, she thereby makes two tactical errors: her financial withdrawal is accepted without protest and, in physically removing herself, she loses the ability to press the point any further. Mrs. Prime's money is more successful in establishing her

superiority elsewhere; she has set up a women's religious society devoted to good works (if not to charity as a virtue), in which her ideas prevail.

The exact nature of Mrs. Prime's problems--the reason why she is so eager to domineer--is unclear, though it seems to be internal. The character is not subject to external social pressures in any direct way, but it appears as if widowhood twists her natural energies into perverse and unhealthy blind alleys. She deliberately makes herself ugly by wearing heavy mourning that is always dowdy and a little dirty-looking; as a young widow, nine years after her husband's death, all this show is evidently morbid, the more so in that the marriage lasted but a few months. Mrs. Prime dislikes and disapproves anything enjoyable. There is an element of the masochistic about the character, as if her small penitential self-deprivations are somehow enjoyable to her. Not content with making herself as harsh and ugly as possible, she insists that her values be accepted by others. Her religious predelictions endorse a Christianity that emphasizes sin and punishment rather than repentance and forgiveness. Implicit in these beliefs is a certain self-satisfaction and self-importance: since she does not regard herself as a sinner, her superiority licenses her (at least in her own eyes) to harass those existing on a lower spiritual plane. Hers is the same self-serving piety as that of Jane Eyre's aunt, Mrs. Reed.

The emotional consequences of Mrs. Prime's widowhood are set forth with great clarity, but little analysis. Her brief marriage was loving and happy, and only after its conclusion did she develop, seemingly by her own choice, the most disagreeable qualities in her personality. She has no children, no object of focus for her emotions--other than her excessive and repellent religious zeal. This is the first Trollope widow to indicate, however incompletely, that being a widow can be the cause of severe emotional problems. Only a few earlier widows seem to miss their husbands; most appear to have adjusted adequately to their changed status. Mrs. Prime appears never to have considered taking a second husband. She is, therefore, much surprised to receive a proposal from the Evangelical minister to whom, as a parishioner, she is much attached. Though the Reverend Mr. Prong dutifully affixes only a perfunctory expression of love to his proposal, and though she does not love him, Mrs. Prime is inclined to look upon him favorably. Presumably, he might be the means to extend her missionary activities among sinners. The eventual sticking point between them is Mrs. Prime's insistence on retaining control of her money, and Mr. Prong's refusal to accept this abrogation of a husband's rights. On hearing of this dispute her sister Rachel expresses the conventionally-approved view when she declares that a women's money ought to belong to the husband. Trollope enters an ironic caveat, however,

in applying this principle to the hypocritical and sly Mr. Prong, who clearly has no other interest in Mrs. Prime. After much indecision and visits to lawyers, she breaks the engagement and resolves never to marry again.

The social implications in the portrait of Dorothea Prime, if not revolutionary, are at least disturbing to the conventions of the time. Here is a widow who prefers not to re-marry because she will not give up control of her own money, who is semi-aware how much pleasure and how much power she drives form it. The social respect and freedom of action which her money confers upon her are dependent on her being a social maverick not subject to male control. Mrs. Prime does not fit easily into any of the three standard views of women's nature. She represents an affront to the conservative outlook, for she is hardly docile or submissive. Nor does the character fit the pretty, moderate picture in "Of Queens' Garden": Ruskin could hardly envision, much less cope with, a woman such as Mrs. Prime. From the liberal standpoint, she might be an unwelcome reminder that a woman could be equally nasty as any man; in another sense, of course, Mrs. Prime can be seen as an Awful Example of what may happen if a woman is denied legitimate outlet for her talents and energies. For there can be little doubt of her competence. What the case of Mrs. Prime finally demonstrates, perhaps, is how limited the three labels are about women, how inapplicable these really are, either to widows or to individual women.

The power of money in a widow's life is examined more obviously and more humorously in the next novel after Rachel Ray. In Can You Forgive Her? (1863-64), Mrs. Arabella Greenow is the major character in one of the novel's three plots. She is older than Mrs. Prime (forty), richer (£40,000), and a more recent widow (four months). Mrs. Greenow is a comic widow, whose poses and posturing do not entirely conceal her shrewd common sense. Although the character loudly bewails the loss of a husband thirty years older, to whom she was married only five years, this does not prevent her from bestowing encouraging smiles on all gentlemen in her vicinity.

Mrs. Greenow's problem is external and social, merely that of finding another husband. She is a merry widow, the object of a widow-hunt on the part of a pair of ludicrous suitors. One is a prosperous farmer with pretensions to gentility; the other is a handsome but penniless retired officer. Mrs. Greenow has no apparent emotional problems, and she is provided with less internal life than is usually the case with Trollope characters, but this may be because she is a comic character.

Mrs. Greenow is a masterful woman, who handles her mutually jealous and suspicious suitors with practiced ease, while she makes up her mind. In some ways, she is reminiscent of Lady Denham in Sanditon. The attitude of her relatives is informative. They regard her with mingled respect

(for her strength of mind) and fear (that she might at any time behave scandalously). A nephew feels she disgraced the family by marrying a tradesman, but the £40,000 tends to balance this objection. Mrs. Greenow finally decides upon the officer because, as she tells a niece, she likes romance with her bread and cheese. She married once for money and now is at liberty to suit herself.

When the niece intimates that Captain Bellfield has little to offer beyond his handsome face and engaging manners, the aunt makes clear that he exactly meets her requirements. She wishes an impoverished husband who would be grateful to her for making his life so much more comfortable and who has few expensive habits or debts. Further, since Mrs. Greenow has arranged that her income remain in her own hands, she will retain the upper hand in their marriage.

The plot's comic elements fail to obscure the character's grasp of a basically serious situation. A more intelligent or more prosperous suitor would demand, and could not be refused, control of his wife's fortune. In picking a weak man, she sees to it that her own wishes will prevail and that her independence will not be compromised. She will have all the social advantages marriage confers upon a woman, without any of the accompanying disadvantages. Trollope achieves the comedy of Mrs. Greenow's story, at least in part, by reversing the sexes of the participants. In the case of a man, of a widower hesitant between two

women of differing merit, the reasoning behind such a choice might be applauded as natural and understandable. Instead, with the situation at the command of a woman, it becomes funny and faintly disreputable. Mrs. Greenow is an affront to the conservative and moderate beliefs about women's nature, but it is precisely the aberration that is comic. Trollope might, perhaps, have been able to handle the social implications raised with such a character only by turning Mrs. Greenow's story into comic action; were she to behave similarly in less farcical circumstances, he would doubtless have been forced to condemn her as unwomanly and offensive.

Mrs. Prime and Mrs. Greenow demonstrate that a widow with money need not be unhappy, that she is able to act with a freedom denied poor widows--or wives. What is chiefly lacking for the moneyed widow is an object on which to lavish her affection. For Mrs. Prime this emotional substitute is the doubtful refuge of a barren religiosity; for Mrs. Greenow, it is a childish man, far her inferior, whom she will treat with maternal warmth and strictness.

The childless marginal widow. Only a few Trollopian widows are shown completely without the encumbrance of children and neighbors; their isolation is therefore qualitatively different from that inescapably endured by other widows. Two minor widows in Can You Forgive Her? provide insights into the social and emotional problems of those so circumstanced.

The most pressing difficulty for these marginal widows is to satisfy the need to remain socially useful. To this end, both widows take self-assumed charge of a younger, motherless woman.

Lady Macleod and Mrs. Marsham are older women, and poor, who live on the fringes of high society. Each is sustained by the indifferent tolerance of more important, richer people. In effect, the two widows are permanent poor relations in an era when, perhaps, family connections were seen as obligations, however tiresome. It is evident that both lead lives devoid of social or emotional meaning.

For Lady Macleod, the seventy-six-year-old widow of a knighted soldier, her relationship with the daughter of a deceased cousin is an attempt to find emotional focus for her life. She had raised Alice Vavasor (now twenty-four) until the age of twelve. It is evident that Lady Macleod regards herself as a foster-mother to Alice and, just as clearly, Alice does not accept the role or duty of surrogate daughter. Alice's resistance depends upon a deep aversion to Lady Macleod's chief attributes: strong Calvinist religious feeling, allied with a worship of high rank.

During the season Lady Macleod spends a month in London as an uncomfortable duty, to maintain her connections with aristocratic cousins. Consciously, this is a disinterested effort to maintain social advantages for Alice; she also calls regularly on a polite but unresponsive

Alice, who calls her "aunt." Throughout the rest of the year, Lady Mcleod lives in lodgings in Cheltenham, where she skimps in order to leave bequests to already-rich titled relatives. Her life is not pleasant, for she is suspicious of her inferiors and tends to dislike her equals--either because of their card-playing or for not going to church. Lady Macleod is able, however, to find excuses for the vices of peers' sons. In addition, the character is a bore.

Lady Macleod's only true pleasure in life, her only tie with human warmth, is a real love for Alice, who finds her something of a burden. Despite her attention, she has seldom prevailed on any matter with Alice--though this is scarcely surprising, in light of Lady Macleod's narrow views. Affection does not, however, necessarily entail any understanding of its object. Lady Macleod's effort to interfere in Alice's affairs--for Alice's own good--brings only distress and embarrassment upon herself. Alice has broken her engagement, a highly reprehensible act at the time, and patiently endures Lady Macleod's own horror and hand-wringing. But "aunt" believes Alice could be brought to her senses by an admonitory letter from a titled cousin. This is a serious miscalculation. Alice is insulted by what she regards as an impertinent and condescending letter from a countess whom she has never met and refuses to meet. Lady Macleod hears a great many unpleasant things from Alice about unwarranted interference and is also obliged to explain Alice's reaction to the offended countess.

What Lady Macleod fails to comprehend is that her affection does not bestow on her a mother's right to insist on Alice's adherence to her own values. Even in retreat forced by Alice's anger, Lady Macleod remains bewildered, if relieved that Alice blames the countess more than herself.

Mrs. Marsham is an "old lady" of inexact age, who plays a role similar in some ways to Lady Macleod's. The principal difference is that affection does not motivate Mrs. Marsham. She is poor but uncomplaining and is related to persons of wealth and rank, with whom she has much to do. The character is intelligent, but malicious and selfish. She likes power, is not overly scrupulous about the truth, and tends to think badly rather than well of people. It is clear that she enjoys the reflected glory of rank and position. The reader is told in a single sentence that Mrs. Marsham has grown children who do not love her. She is not, then, actually childless, though the novel portrays her as if she were. It is unusual in Trollope that a widowed mother's children should not be in evidence. Their absence is implicitly explained by the role she assumes.

Mrs. Marsham becomes the self-appointed duenna to a second young heroine, Lady Glencora Palliser. Mrs. Marsham was the closest friend of Plantagenet Palliser's late mother. When he marries a wealthy heiress in a family-arranged marriage of convenience, there are problems. He is dull and placid; Lady Glencora is passionate and flighty.

Mrs. Marsham takes it upon herself to control the bride's impulsive starts, and watches her closely. Palliser is dimly aware of Mrs. Marsham's surveillance and is inclined to think it a good idea; he does not realize the enjoyment she has in controlling Lady Glencora. Indeed, Mrs. Marsham treats Lady Glencora nearly as a jailer might regard a prisoner. The struggle between the two women results on several occasions in open insults from Lady Glencora. The older woman is determined to prevail and, in punishment, tries to drive off Lady Glencora's only young female friend. Palliser is angered by his wife's complaints about Mrs. Marsham. But Mrs. Marsham's exertions are essentially in vain, for the more she insists upon something, the more Lady Glencora resolves on doing the opposite. Eventually, after severe provocation, Lady Glencora tells her husband that she will not receive Mrs. Marsham as a guest in her house; this is the end of the situation.

It is evident that Mrs. Marsham has a very tenuous standing in the fashionable world. Were she to make good her grip on the Pallisers (he is a duke's heir)--as adviser and confidante of the husband and ruler of the wife--she would thereby secure a solid position in society. The character also displays satisfaction in being able to come between husband and wife. Trollope seems to indicate with Mrs. Marsham that power can be an emotional substitute for love.

Both marginal widows attempt to find social and emotional justification for their meaningless lives in maintaining the semblance of a maternal role. It is evident, however, that such role-playing cannot be a matter of self-will or individual need, since another person is necessarily involved. Lady Macleod, because of her good intentions, is allowed at the novel's end to resume once more the illusion of standing as a mother to Alice Vavasor. Mrs. Marsham, less disinterested, is to be provided with a vulgar social-climber husband as a fitting (if scarcely credible) punishment.

Conclusions. The widows of 1862-64 demonstrate the continuing evolution of the motif. Their immediate predecessors tended to dominate sensational situations in more dramatic novels. In contrast, these later widows lead drabber lives of greater complexity. No single ethical issue offers itself for decision; their difficulties are more diffuse and more closely tied to being widowed and outcast in society.

With the widows of this stage Trollope goes beyond some formerly common stereotypes in his fiction. His portrayal of widows deepens, with a new realization that widows' circumstances and their individual responses are more variable than the stereotypes made any allowance for. The furthest he can develop the stock character of the "good" widowed mother is Mrs. Dale. But Trollope does not leave the stereotype before suggesting, as had never been the

case before, the penalties and miseries such a widow may force herself to endure. He now develops a more dramatically promising and less rigidly defined kind of widow: the "bad" widowed mother, whose personality is not so completely subjugated by motherhood. Trollope also reshapes the concept of the young widow, who is no longer the innocent girl, virtually indistinguishable from other young maidens. Instead, she is molded by experience, not necessarily in positive or pleasing ways.

With the 1862-64 widows, Trollope expands and deepens his exploration of a wide range of related emotional problems associated with widowhood--the loneliness, the self-doubt, the emotional aberrations. Such problems were earlier posed only in the incompletely sketched character of Lady Desmond. Trollope also adds a new twist in creating widows with money, which liberates them from some social pressures but imposes others, of which he seems (as yet) but barely aware. The lives of impoverished widows are grimmer than before, ugly with problems not easily resolvable. They are obviously isolated from a society that looks down upon them, but this isolation is itself relative. The novels display an increasing vulnerability to negative pressures from progressively a larger and more demanding society. Mrs. Dale, virtually alone at Allington, has little to contend with except the squire; Mrs. Ray and Mrs. Prime face the fairly simple demands of an unsophisticated

village society; Mrs. Greenow, Lady Macleod, and Mrs. Marsham feel the more impersonal, crueler pressures of London values.

The three novels in which these characters appear are largely devoted to the question of the status of women in English society. The widows in each book represent a partial aspect of a fuller exposition, but--while conventional sex-defined roles are eventually affirmed for young maidens and new brides--the problems of widows are not so similarly subject to pat answers of the patriarchal system.[5] To the widows of these novels, men are seen in a peculiar and somewhat menacing light, as aggressive intruders that disturb the stagnant but safe, almost exclusively feminine world.

However much of an advance the widows of 1862-64 may represent, Trollope has not yet fully explored the implications of the "bad" widowed mother and of the moneyed young widow. In the next group of widows, he delves into the rich social and emotional possibilities of such characters.

## Notes

[1]Quoted by Smalley, pp. 203-4, rev. of The Small House at Allington, London Review, 8 (7 May 1864), 494-96.

[2]The Small House at Allington (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), I, 29.

[3]See Wollstonecraft, pp. 87-89.

[4]Helena Lopata describes the social isolate widow in similar terms. See Widowhood in an American City, p. 266.

[5]For a very full discussion of the feminist implications in Can You Forgive Her? see George Levine, "Can You Forgive Him? Trollope's Can You Forgive Her? and the Myth of Realism," Victorian Studies, 18, No. 1 (September, 1974), 5-30.

# CHAPTER V

## TROLLOPE'S WIDOWS: THE MIDDLE PERIOD, PART THREE (1864-71)

Trollope's development of the widow culminates in six novels written between 1864 and 1871. After this time, he ceases to be concerned with widows; those subsequently created break no new ground. The widows of 1864-71 demonstrate Trollope's most mature art; he explores these characters with more depth and thoroughness than earlier. These third-stage widows have exceptional problems. Personal obsession, to some degree, afflicts them and to this is added intense external social pressures. With this group of widows Trollope examines the effect of money on the actions and decisions of characters living in the public eye. These widows differ from their immediate predecessors in six ways:

1--All the widows are major characters and, with a single exception, dominate the action of the novel. Their concerns provide the central motive force in the story.

2--Some of the widows are complicated, some fairly simple. All are aggressive, yet an essential inner passivity seems to contradict their outward

acts. The less complex widows appear to be the most obsessed.

3--The autonomy of wealthy widows seems largely illusory and is restricted by social limitations imposed on women.

4--The widows are all near-tragic characters. Only one possesses any aspect of the comic.

5--All the widows but one may be regarded as adventuresses, and some scandal taints their reputations.

6--The nerve-wracking world and lives of the widows of 1864-71 is more frightening and more dangerous than that of earlier widows.

Five widows will be examined in Chapter V; they fall into the categories of young widow and "bad" widowed mother. Both are more fully characterized than was earlier the case.

Development of the widow. Trollope enlarges still again the world within which his widows operate and creates more complex characters to deal with it. Widows just prior to this point are depicted on the fringes of village society. Now, however, third-stage widows are seen in the context of London and with their personal problems aggravated by public opinion, to which they are extremely vulnerable.

Trollope continues to employ the two types of widows created earlier--the young widow and the "bad" widowed mother--but develops the possibilities of these more seriously, not to say grimly. Previous to this latest group

of widows, Trollope had suggested that the power of money could secure a widow's independence, but his ability to explore the idea was limited by comic aspects connected with Mrs. Prime (Rachel Ray) and Mrs. Greenow (Can You Forgive Her?). Now less casual, Trollope demonstrates with three wealthy young widows that the possession of money provides insufficient social and emotional security. His two "bad" widowed mothers are no longer merely incompetent, like Mrs. Ray (Rachel Ray), but actively hostile to their children. They sacrifice their children to their own wishes; earlier, nearly the reverse was true for Mrs. Dale (The Small House at Allington) and Mrs. Ray.

The first young widow of 1864-71 marries a blackguard for his money, falls among unsavory company, and is subsequently forced to face down the scandal around her name, while trying to secure the love of the man she loves. The second young widow is a foreigner without social credentials who tries, among the xenophobic English, to establish herself in upper-class society. The third young widow combines obstinacy with a flair for truly inspired lying, to create for herself problems of impressive proportions. The first "bad" widowed mother is a religious fanatic convinced she will save her child's soul only by completely breaking the latter's spirit. The second "bad" widowed mother envisions her own social rehabilitation in terms of compelling her child to submit to her own distorted social values.

The young widow. Three novels written in 1864 illustrate the transition between underdeveloped or partially developed widows and those most fully characterized. Trollope evidently became intrigued by the fertile combination of women and money in Rachel Ray (1863). In the succeeding novel, Can You Forgive Her? (16 August 1863-28 April 1864), the central theme is the social pressures that control women with money. Two young single women are married off, in a conventional resolution of the problem. But Trollope fails to face the difficulties posed with the wealthy semi-comic widow, Mrs. Greenow. With Miss Mackenzie (22 May-18 August 1864), Trollope attempted a new tack. The heroine is a thirty-five-year-old spinster who unexpectedly inherits a small fortune. But Margaret Mackenzie is colorless and passive; the novel remains static because its author provides her with literally no past history or experience upon which character development might be based. More importantly, however, Trollope has clear difficulty in comprehending as a serious character a mature, never-married, financially-independent woman.

Trollope finds his stride in The Claverings (24 August-31 December 1864) with the fully-developed character of the rich young widow, the Countess of Ongar. Lady Ongar is provided with a past history against which she must struggle. In the opening scene of the novel she is shown dismissing the man she loves and announcing her engagement to a man

she does not love, for financial reasons. As the relatively impoverished daughter of a deceased peer, the Honourable Julia Brabazon has a fortune of £5,000 that yields an income of £200 a year, but her debts amount to £600. She has been living precariously for about three years in the household of Sir Hugh Clavering, the husband of her elder sister. The man she loves is Harry Clavering, a first cousin of Sir Hugh's, who has as little money as herself and very doubtful future prospects. The man she decides to marry, the Earl of Ongar, is a nearly worn-out roué of thirty-six but with an annual income of £60,000. After fifteen months of marriage her husband dies abroad and Julia Ongar returns to London as a twenty-five-year-old widow with a magnificent jointure: £8,000 a year plus life possession of a fine estate.

Lady Ongar is confronted with an external public relations problem and with two private emotional dilemmas, all of which result from her marriage. She is forced to re-establish her good name that has been tarnished by gossip. The widow also must fight to regain her self-respect and, in addition, she tries to recapture the affections of Harry Clavering. No present ethical choice faces Julia Ongar; the consequences of a wrong past choice continue to haunt her. In marrying only for money, the character's motives would have seemed laudable common sense to many contemporary English people: similar marriages were not

uncommon in upper-class society into the 1860s.[1] What Lady Ongar discovers, however, is that in marrying so sensibly she has violated something deep in her own nature and that she feels soiled. Her brief marriage entailed humiliation at the hands of a husband she quickly learned to despise.

The cloud about her name was the work of her husband, who had accused her of "misbehaving" and hoped to gather evidence to divorce her. Acting on the supposition that the rumor is true, the Ongar family lawyers attempt to deny the widow's dower rights. Incensed, Lady Ongar--by legal threats--forces her husband's family to yield what has been settled on her. This dispute does not help dispel the scandal, nor does the attitude of her closest relatives who repudiate her at a time when the widow most needs both their social countenance and emotional support. The only person among her family connections to show her any kindness and assistance on her return to England is Harry Clavering, who initially does so at the request of her sister, Lady Clavering. Julia Ongar eventually retrieves her reputation through sober, careful behavior during her mourning period, by a rapprochement with the Courtons (the Ongar family name), and by a nominal reconciliation with her brother-in-law. However, worrisome and mortifying the weight of adverse public opinion is to Lady Ongar, it is more easily resolved and less painful than her internal emotional problems.

Restoration of her self-respect and self-confidence is more difficult. Julia Ongar is forced to question her motives which led her so blithely into a disastrous marriage. She feels that she has prostituted herself for material things, the value of which she finds she had greatly overestimated. Her sense of personal defilement also includes the unlovely memory of her husband. She tells Harry Clavering that Lord Ongar had unsuccessfully tried to maneuver her into committing adultery with a friend of his. Harry is also told of her contempt for her husband, of her determination not to be manipulated by him, and of her thoughts of suicide which were allayed by her conviction that Lord Ongar would soon drink himself to death. Although the widow is angered by the actions of her relatives and indignant about the slanders on her name, it seems as if she almost believes these to be proper punishments for what she brought upon herself. Her conscience tells her, apparently, that she deserves to suffer.

Julia Ongar's sole confidante is Harry Clavering, to whom she pours out her bitterness, her self-reproach, her loneliness. He is so sympathetic that she is led to hope his former affection has been re-awakened and may soon bring him to propose marriage. The widow's urgent need for him rests upon complex reasons he knows nothing about. During the misery of her brief married life, she clung to a mental picture of Harry Clavering's wholesomeness and

decency. Furthermore, the great income and possessions which so burden Lady Ongar would be lightened and given meaning were she able to bestow these upon Harry as her husband; he would then be placed on a firm financial footing, possibly as the basis for a future public career. In her eyes, Harry could--in a sense--justify her marriage and its aftermath, while simultaneously blotting out that miserable episode from her memory. In addition, Julia Ongar desperately needs a man's affectionate approval of herself as a woman; she also requires an object on which she may lavish affection. Harry Clavering is extremely interested in her and is dazzled by her being a countess and even more beautiful than before. While both attracted and repelled by her money, he does not propose, for he is already engaged to one of Trollope's "little brown girls"[2] and cannot figure a way to escape this commitment. He does not tell Lady Ongar about his engagement for fear she would dismiss him.

Why Julia Ongar, or even his fiancée, would be interested in Harry Clavering can only be ascribed to an undelineated sexual attraction; he is a handsome man of twenty-five, but probably the feeblest of Trollope's many feckless young men. His is a purposeless, spineless character redeemed from the contemptible by undeniable, if fitful, good intentions and good nature and by a non-malicious selfishness rooted in an invincible stupidity.

He is essentially passive; a perceptive male character in the novel notes that he is the kind of man made much of by women and on close terms with them, but looked down on by other men. Harry Clavering is the type of domestic male pussycat Mario Praz is inclined to discover in The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction. Harry usually does the bidding of the woman he has most recently been with: Julia Ongar, Lady Clavering, his mother, his fiancée, or her sister-in-law in turn manipulate him. It is interesting to note that the fiancée's family is highly fearful that Harry will fail to honor his engagement. All blame for his behavior is placed upon Lady Ongar. When she learns of the engagement--not from Harry--she upbraids him and tells him all is over between them. He weeps at the interview; she does not.

The destruction of her hopes about Harry has a surprisingly bracing effect on the widow. The character's previous danger seemed the probability of sinking into a morass of self-pity and morbidity. Instead, she behaves with an innate generosity and intelligence that are credible. Lady Ongar realizes, as Harry has not, the distress that has been caused his neglected fiancée and tries to think what would be best for them all. Furthermore, she is aware that her reviving reputation could not stand the shock of the scandal were Harry to jilt his betrothed in order to marry herself.

Julia Ongar's decency is also shown in the novel by the way she deals forcefully with three disreputable characters. One is her brother-in-law, whose belated attempt at reconciliation she accurately sees as a ploy to take the wife who bores him off his hands. Her strength is apparent in her handling of Madame Gordeloup and Count Pateroff, Polish sister and brother who were intimates of Lord Ongar's. The count, the man with whom she supposedly had an affair, tries to blackmail her into marrying him. Her response is tough and insulting; she threatens him with the police should he bother her again. Madame Gordeloup hopes to batten on Lady Ongar. Because she is lonely and before she has fully taken Madame Gordeloup's measure, Julia Ongar passively accepts the woman's attentions; but when these become troublesome, she promptly rids herself of Madame Gordeloup.

Earlier, Trollope had suggested--with Mrs. Prime, Eleanor Bold, Mrs. Greenow--that money provides a young widow with independence and a freedom from male supervision. Lady Ongar's wealth, however, effects little more than an illusion of social independence. Instead, her money attracts a number of potential parasites. Count Pateroff, Harry Clavering, and a third suitor hope to ally themselves to her rich jointure, though it must be acknowledged that Harry's motives go beyond this. Sir Hugh Clavering and Madame Gordeloup have other designs on Lady Ongar's money.

Widowhood, particularly when recent, imposed restrictions that are furthered deepened by scandalous gossip. Julia Ongar is forced by the conventions of mourning to live in seclusion, which isolates her from all except those who expect some gain for themselves. Lady Ongar quickly learns, as have other Trollope widows, that without male sanction her status is doubtful; Sir Hugh Clavering might have bestowed on her the protection of a brother, or (in different circumstances) Harry Clavering that of a husband. She needs this masculine sponsorship all the more because of her late husband's unsavory character and the rumors about her own conduct.

Not only is Lady Ongar on uncertain ground socially, but she is riven emotionally by self-disgust and a deep loneliness. In view of all the character's difficulties, her evident aggressiveness and force are somewhat hollow. Her spirited actions are basically self-defensive responses to the importunities of others. If wealth does confer any power on her, it is that of refusal. The countess does not have to satisfy the demands made upon her, demands that would have no point were she not rich.

Julia Ongar's loneliness is partially caused by stagnation. As a woman, there is no occupation, no activity upon which she may vent her obviously abundant energies. As a childless young widow, the conventional maternal concerns are denied her. At length, however, when her weak-willed

sister is suddenly widowed, Lady Ongar is given a purpose, someone to care for, to lavish affection upon, to indulge.

Julia Ongar is singular among Trollopian young widows, for the character is strongly individuated. Widowhood does not submerge her as a person nor can the label "widow" categorize her. Perhaps her most unusual quality is a virtually complete self-awareness seldom seen in any Trollope widow, with the exception of Mrs. Dale. Lady Ongar's self-knowledge is hardly a benefit, for it is the means by which her pain and bitterness are intensified. Her creator seems intent on punishing her for the nearly unforgiveable transgression of making a loveless, mercenary marriage: there is no easy re-marriage for her, no penance brought to a comfortable conclusion. At the novel's end, as she departs with her sister to reside in a resort town where they know no one, Julia Ongar tells Harry Clavering that he will never hear of her being down-hearted. Trollope appears content to insinuate that she will eventually recover from the debacle because she is penitent, honest, and courageous; her worth is attested to by the respect with which she is now regarded by the Clavering family and by the Courtons. Emotional rehabilitation will apparently follow upon the social. Sadleir believes her portrait shows Trollope's power and subtlety: ". . . the super jilt, the once ambitious now repentant, lonely, tragic woman . . . [is] the perfect example of the novelist's skill in rousing pity even for deserved misfortune."[3]

Lady Ongar in some ways embodies the liberal view of women's nature. She is clearly the most intelligent and most forceful character in the novel; her competence to lead her own life is apparent. Her one great error of judgment, her marriage, has been for her a major learning experience. Julia Ongar herself seems to favor the moderate position, for she appears (mistakenly) to believe that her desired marriage to Harry Clavering would be that of complementary partners. An incongruity in the novel is that she is unable to find in the world of The Claverings a man who is her equal.

Although Madame Max Goesler is a continuing character in five of the six Parliamentary or Palliser novels, only in two does she come within the purview of this study of widows. She is a major character in Phineas Finn (1866-67) and in Phineas Redux (1870-71). In the former she is, to use theatrical terms, a supporting rather than a starring performer; in the latter she is clearly of greater importance.

The character's chief qualities and background are presented in Phineas Finn; these are somewhat amplified in Phineas Redux. Madame Goesler is presumably Austrian (though this is not definitely stated), the thirtyish widow of a Viennese banker. She is rich, known to spend £7-8,000 a year, has a house in Park Lane, and gives small dinner parties to which an invitation is regarded as a social prize.

In addition, Madame Max (as the other characters call her) speaks excellent English, is attractive and witty, dresses distinctively and tastefully, and is an accomplished horsewoman.

Yet this paragon suffers deprivation--social and emotional. By means of a deliberate, careful campaign Madame Max has established herself in upper-class English society. But her footing is tenuous; she is not everywhere received and is regarded doubtfully by many. Not only is she a foreigner, a significant liability among the English, but one whose background and origins remain obscure. Unkind rumors insist that she is a Jew, a suggestion not exactly helpful to an unattached woman with social ambitions in England in the 1860s.[4] Madame Max has made her way socially by discreet use of her money and adroit maneuvering. But it is a process that never permits her to relax, for she must always watch her opportunity, accept slights with seeming equanimity while storing these in mind for later repayment. The character is always a little afraid of a misstep, of losing all that she has so laboriously accomplished. She is not conceited, does not strongly believe in herself, and is surprised at her success. What drives Madame Goesler to storm society is not clear, even to her own mind, nor does she have any adequate measure or goal by which she can realize her achievement. Her preoccupation with social position is little less than an

obsession, upon which she can concentrate exclusively, for she has no emotional object in her life that requires the diversion of her energy. Despite her social stratagems, time hangs heavily on Marie Goesler's hands. She is bored and experiences, like other Trollope widows, personal loneliness and a sense of social detachment. Moreover, she has never loved.

Madame Max faces two crises in Phineas Finn. In the first she receives an unmistakeable offer from the elderly Duke of Omnium to make her his mistress. Her response illustrates Trollope's difference from most other novelists of the time; he deliberately underplays what could be a melodramatic scene of outraged virtue, and no prudery is evident: rich widows of obscure background might realistically expect this kind of response from wealthy aristocrats. Madame Max calmly declines the duke's offer on the ground that this would be socially unwise and would negate all her past (and future) social efforts. If Madame Max displays any emotion, it is chagrin that her position in society is still so equivocal that the duke could make such an overture. She parts civilly from the duke, who returns somewhat later with a proposal of marriage.

Madame Max is placed in a dilemma. As Duchess of Omnium she would be immediately placed at the top of the social ladder, but worries that she might not be received were she to marry him. She fears accusations of having

entrapped the duke in his dotage. The wife of his heir, Lady Glencora Palliser, tries to dissuade Madame Max; she is alarmed that a son born from the marriage would cut her own little boy out of the succession to the dukedom. In her anxiety to prevent the marriage, Lady Glencora is offensive. After considerable thought, Madame Max writes to decline the proposal. Her reply displays both common sense and insecurity: she fears the duke might, at some future time, feel himself degraded by marriage to a woman not his equal in station and that this would create an uncomfortable situation for herself. She also tells the duke that as Madame Goesler she moves freely and relaxed in society (not entirely true), but that she could no longer do so as an "unequal" duchess. Her unexpressed reasons are even more sensible and reveal a recognition of her emotional needs. The widow realizes how she relishes her independence and resolves to exchange this freedom only for something more solidly worthwhile, for she has already married one old man lovelessly.

However, Madame Max is not the loser in rejecting the duke's proposal. Lady Glencora, relieved and rather ashamed of herself, tacitly becomes Madame Max's social sponsor. Thus Madame Max becomes closely tied to the Palliser family. When the story of the rejected offer leaks out, she is regarded with more respect and interest than before. Her decision not to marry the duke eventually solidifies her social position perhaps more surely than if she had become his wife.

Madame Max's second crisis involves her personal emotions. She becomes interested in Phineas Finn, a young and very handsome Irish Member of Parliament. He is another version of Trollope's standard feckless young man, similar to Harry Clavering in lack of purpose and perceptivity. But Phineas has other redeeming qualities--a total lack of vanity, an engaging good-nature, and a rueful after-the-fact awareness of his mistakes. His chief problem is money. Members of Parliament did not then receive salaries and, in addition, election expenses were high. For a time he holds a sub-cabinet position, but is eventually forced to resign. Without this salary he is compelled to return to Ireland. Madame Max blushingly offers Phineas Finn money to take care of his embarrassments. It is a little ambiguous whether she is suggesting a gift or herself. He thanks her but refuses. Near the end of the novel, when he is most defeated and on the point of leaving for Ireland, Madame Max proposes to him: if he will not take money from her, take her first. Though tempted, he tells her this cannot be. She is humiliated at betraying herself.

Phineas Redux opens two and a half years after the close of the earlier novel. Madame Max has spent much of the intervening time helping Lady Glencora nurse the slowly dying duke. She expects the intimacy will end with his death. On his deathbed the duke again offers to marry her and she refuses. He leaves her £20,000 and all his jewels;

she will not accept these for two reasons, that the world will believe she was the duke's mistress and that the Pallisers will think she looked for something profitable from her relationship with the duke.

A mutual friend contrives a meeting between Madame Max and Phineas Finn who has returned to England. Her interest is re-awakened and she realizes that the emptiness within herself is a need for love. Matters are brought to a head by Phineas' arrest for murder. The evidence is circumstantial and damning, his bitter public quarrel earlier the same evening with the victim, a long-time enemy. The only other person with a motive is provided with an alibi. Madame Max is appalled to find that Phineas' lawyer is interested only in saving his life, not in proving his innocence. She does some investigating on her own and turns up evidence that throws doubt on the other man's alibi. A little later she travels to Prague to unearth information that further incriminates the same suspect; Phineas is acquitted on the basis of her activities on his behalf. Her persistence and disinterested love are the more remarkable in that she believes, once free, he will marry another woman. Instead, he tells her of his love and they become engaged.

Marie Goesler is perhaps Trollope's most remarkable and untypical widow. Her problems and their successful resolution are carried through two novels. What sets her apart from other complex Trollope widows is that she manages to

achieve both her principal needs, love and social position. Phineas Finn marries her and the new Duchess of Omnium not only maintains their intimacy but becomes her closest friend.

Madame Max is one of the most aggressive female characters in Trollope. Only Mrs. Proudie and the predatory husband-hunter, Arabella Trefoil, in The American Senator would seem to rival her. Undoubtedly Madame Max is the most aggressive widow, as is evidenced by her campaign to establish herself in society, her proposals to Phineas Finn, and her initiative that proves his innocence. For the most part she is careful not to let her aggressiveness be publicly visible, lest this arouse disapproval. Still, Madame Max remains a somewhat enigmatic character. She is a foreigner whose cast of mind is less predictable than that of an Englishwoman. She is also secretive; her intentions are seldom perceptible to other characters. Her interior disclosures are relatively infrequent, nor is she given to extended self-analysis. Madame Max is more than her surface--handsome, distinctive, stylish, charming--but her depths are only partially probed.

What Phineas Finn has to recommend himself to her, aside from his handsome face and good nature, is not immediately clear. He is, however, more suitable than is at first apparent. In Phineas (a country doctor's son) Madame Max finds a man from a modest background similar to her own (a country lawyer's daughter); furthermore, as an

Irishman in London he himself is something of a foreigner and--less conspicuously--a gentlemanly social climber and adventurer. With him as her husband, Madame Max need not fear the condescension that marriage with a great nobleman might bring. In dealing with her social superiors, she spends much time keeping up her guard; with Phineas she would be able to relax. It is also evident in both novels that Phineas perceives Madame Max's qualities more clearly than any of her London acquaintances. As another outsider like herself, his eye is frequently observant. He notices how tough and clever she is, while remarking her social maneuvering with interest and no moral judgment.

Madame Max has remarkable vitality which social climbing cannot fully absorb. She eventually realizes that she requires an object on which to lavish her energies and affections. Without such a focus, which is Phineas, her life and her money are meaningless. After their engagement she tells Phineas that her money does not matter, that they go into marriage as equals. This is correct, but the marriage is unconventional in that the bride brings virtues usually regarded as masculine and her groom offers milder attributes more often thought to be feminine. The marriage of Marie Goesler and Phineas Finn implies a virtual assent to the liberal view of women as men's equals. This widow's re-marriage carries with it the recognition of complex emotional and social issues not previously considered with

the more naive characters of Eleanor Bold and Mrs. Greenow. Madame Goesler's status as a widow provides her with money and the ability to move freely in society which an unmarried woman was unlikely to possess. She shares the loneliness and the sense of social detachment with other Trollope widows, but little else. Lady Ongar bears some resemblance to Madame Max, but is guilty about her marriage, fails to capture the man she loves, and has no need to pursue a social status she already possesses. Mrs. Greenow is another antecedent: she has a sense of release in widowhood and an awareness of money's use as an offensive social weapon. Madame Max's money has a positive effect on her re-marriage. Her wealth leaves her free to select a husband who will accept her as his equal; she is able to avoid conventional male marital superiority and feminine subordination.

A contemporary reviewer of Phineas Redux, struck by Madame Max's ". . . self-control and reserve," goes on to appraise her favorably.

> Madame Max is one of Mr. Trollope's most graceful and carefully studied characters. With just enough of the adventuress to have an element of calculation in her nature, and quite sufficient resource and acuteness to be worth more in the ordinary concerns of life than almost any of the personages into competition with whom she comes [sic], the tenderness of her heart gives a true fascination to the character.[5]

Subsequent critics have also placed Madame Max in the gallery of Trollope's most notable and attractive characters.

To my knowledge, only Rebecca West has felt differently; with surprising vituperation, she regards Madame Max as a cold-blooded and repellant harpy.[6]

The word "harpy" would, to her enemies, be an accurate description of Lizzie Eustace, the central character in The Eustace Diamonds (1869-70), the third novel in the Parliamentary series. This twenty-two-year-old widow of a wealthy baronet is dishonest, greedy, and very lovely. She had married, without affection, a man known to be dying of consumption; as a dowerless (and unscrupulous) girl of good family, the opportunity was too important to let pass. Widowed less than a year later, she is left with a jointure of £4,000 a year and life use of a country house in Scotland.

Lady Eustace has two basic problems: legal difficulties and the necessity of finding a new husband. The character's external social problems are more staggering than those of Lady Ongar and Madame Max Goesler. For Lady Eustace is nothing less than the major figure in a great scandal and, thus, is powerfully affected by vociferous public opinion. At first regarded as somehow dubious, as the dimensions of the scandal begin to become know, Lizzie Eustace is thought to be either the victim of a crime or its perpetrator; she faces a lawsuit and a police investigation. Her personal problems, equally compelling, derive from a defective personality and form the basis for her external social problems. Lizzie Eustace is essentially

hollow, with no depth or real convictions. She is, however, a superb improvisator and actress with a weakness for the flashy and dramatic. She has no regard for the truth, enjoys lying for its own sake without expecting to be believed; incapable of anger or indignation, she is also incapable of love. She is unaware of her many flaws, for she likewise lacks the capacity for introspection.

Lady Eustace's greed leads her to refuse to surrender to the family lawyers a diamond necklace worth £10,000 that has belonged to the Eustace estate for several generations. She says, falsely, that her husband gave it to her as a personal gift. The direct results of this claim include a lawsuit, two burglaries, perjury, a magistrate's hearing as well as nearly total personal distress to Lady Eustace and to anyone connected with her. She is credited by many of the other characters as manifesting an almost diabolic cleverness, but she makes snap decisions at crucial points which lead to even greater difficulties and which she must then labor to conceal.

Lizzie Eustace is both a serious and a comic character. She is serious in that her apprehensions and ignorance are treated straightforwardly and because she truly, if deservedly, suffers. Her greatest appeal, however, is as a comic character, in the poses she assumes vis-à-vis the other characters. In one of the most affecting of these (even she believes it for the moment), she uses her

infant son to create--for the gullible--a maudlin picture of herself as the personification of loving and selfless motherhood. Much of the widow's comic quality is derived from the discrepancy between what she thinks herself and what she really is. However discouraged she becomes, her spirits are always raised by the thought of her income, which no one can take away from her. Even though she is amoral and worthless, Lizzie Eustace remains oddly attractive, with the bonhomie of a mischievous child, for "there is a companionableness, a life and spirit, about her which keeps her within the bounds of humanity."[7]

She is most amusing, though self-defeating, in her ability to manipulate her two most reputable suitors, both of whom have guilty consciences. Lord Fawn, a dull civil servant, is her nominal fiancé through most of the novel. Lady Eustace keeps him on stand-by, as it were, and foils his feeble attempts to escape until near the end; Lord Fawn represents her desire for sober respectability and social status. Frank Greystock, an impecunious lawyer and Member of Parliament who is her first cousin, is Lizzie's favorite. He is good-looking, pleasant, unscrupulous--a more intelligent and self-aware male version of herself. He seems to represent to Lady Eustace her equal, the only man whose advice she trusts and with whom she is emotionally comfortable. After a protracted struggle with himself and with her, he honors a prior engagement to another woman.

Lord George deBruce Carruthers, brother of a marquess, is a less prepossessing suitor but brings out her capacity for self-delusion. He is a raffish man-about-town, aged forty-five, with vaguely radical opinions, but Lizzie sees him as delightfully wicked, as her glamorous and romantic Corsair. In actuality Lord George is a brusque, careful man living precariously on an inadequate income. While briefly tempted to propose to her near the close of the novel, he is halted by the realization of the havoc she has caused, including his being watched by the police. Although he does not object to dishonesty per se, he is frightened by Lizzie Eustace's lack of proportion and foresight. He perceives her essential childishness, for she still fails to grasp her own responsibility for all that has happened; while the other characters have somehow been adversely affected, she alone has emerged relatively unscathed.

Lizzie's final and successful suitor, the Reverend Joseph Emilius, is one of Trollope's most unpleasant anti-Semitic portraits. He is a greasy rogue full of flowery and false sentiments, which Lizzie enjoys without believing. That she can find Emilius attractive demonstrates, to Trollope, her complete lack of judgment. Lady Eustace knows that she could find a more socially acceptable husband, but the other candidates have all been eliminated and she is wearily convinced she must have a husband immediately.

Lizzie Eustace perhaps illustrates the conservative maxim that the weakness of female nature requires male support and control. Her relatives are urgent that she should quickly re-marry a suitable man. She might also be used as an example by proponents of the liberal view because her damaging ignorance of the world may be ascribed to the unnatural seclusion imposed upon middle-class and upper-class women. Furthermore, her mercenary first marriage could be attributed to the lack of any viable economic alternative.

Lizzie Eustace is made to feel her widow's status in two ways. Externally, she is under intense pressure to marry again; internally, she is panicked by a sense of her own incompetence. To her, a husband would take the burden of her fears and would insulate her from an unkind world. Her generous jointure enables her to cause considerable mischief and also attracts fortune-hunters, a term applicable to all her suitors. None really falls in love with her. Lady Eustace bears some similarity to Lady Ongar, for the circumstances of their marriages are nearly identical. But Lizzie lacks Julia Ongar's intelligence and generosity; unlike Lady Ongar, her obsession is not the love of a man but mere obstinacy over a necklace. Like Madame Max Goesler, Lizzie contrives her effects but these often aid no clear goal. In her comic insincerity, Lizzie Eustace is somewhat reminiscent of Mrs. Greenow. Lady

Eustace does resemble the other widows in at least one way, her basic passivity. The characters in the novel mistakenly view her as very aggressive. Generally this quality is little more than bravado, carried out against an irresolute or angry character. Most of Lizzie Eustace's defiance is in reaction to decisions or acts of other characters, usually male. Seldom does she act by her own initiative.

Having money does not secure peace of mind to the young widow. Lady Ongar, Madame Max Goesler, and Lady Eustace all show the essential irrelevance of money to their happiness: it cannot purchase what they most need, emotional security. Nor does money allow them much freedom of action. Their uncertain status before public opinion limits their options, while making more urgent their need for the social protection supplied by a husband. Money is a complication, for it attracts fortune-hunters who are unlikely to provide either social or emotional stability.

The "bad widowed mother. In 1867 Trollope used the same basic situation in two entirely opposite ways. In Phineas Finn, a minor character, the widowed Lady Baldock tries to dictate her own conservative social values to a grown-up orphaned niece who lives with her. Lady Baldock is invariably and comically discomfited, for she is routed at each attempt by her niece's sharp tongue and flippant

disrespect. In Linda Tressel--a short novel, possibly Trollope's most painful--written later the same year, the central situation is an aunt crushing a niece in a conflict over religious and authoritarian values.

Madame Charlotte Staubach, a childless widow just over forty years of age, has raised her orphaned niece, Linda Tressel, from childhood. The two regard their relationship as virtually that of mother and daughter. Madame Staubach is a Calvinist and, like other Evangelicals in Trollope's fiction, is unfavorably portrayed. Her religion is intolerant, vengeful, and joyless, though the character does not perceive this. From her own point of view, the widow has one problem: her niece refuses to marry the man picked out by herself. The issue rapidly turns into a horrifying fear to Madame Staubach that Linda Tressel is on the verge of becoming a lost soul; the only way this may be averted is by compelling her submission. The true problem in the novel, and its sole driving force, is actually Madame Staubach's religiosity.

When the twenty-year-old Linda, previously always dutiful and obedient, firmly rejects the arrangement on the grounds that she does not love the fifty-year-old lodger in their house and finds him repellent, Madame Staubach is appalled. She cannot comprehend any validity in Linda's reasons. What the widow does see is pride and self-will which, if not crushed, will condemn the girl to perdition.

Total submissiveness is the prime moral necessity for a woman, Madame Staubach believes: both her duty and her love require that Linda be forced into the marriage. The aunt interprets Linda's increasing repugnance to the marriage as the growth of pride; therefore, the marriage becomes, to Madame Staubach, even more necessary as an act of self-immolation. The girl is subjected to months of unrelenting pressure--harangues, prayers, pleading. Madame Staubach abandons all human feeling and suppresses her few faint twinges of conscience in her urgency to break Linda's spirit. The widow experiences no real self-doubt about her aims and comes to regard her own wishes as identical with God's. When the hapless girl is driven to admit her affection for a man about her own age, the aunt calls her a "castaway," a euphemism for slut.

Finally the niece collapses and agrees to marry the man she hates who, insulted by her resistance, clearly intends to be revenged on her when she is his wife. Before the wedding day, however, Linda runs away, though ill, to a relative's house in a distant town where she slowly dies. Madame Staubach is sent for and must endure being told by the Catholic sister-in-law she despises that she has murdered Linda. At the novel's close the widow is confronted with the furies of her own dormant conscience, for she truly loved the girl, and (even worse) is faced with a crisis of faith. She had always believed that faith could

move mountains, but it had been insufficient in coping with Linda. In destroying her daughter-niece, she has also destroyed herself.

The character of Madame Staubach becomes progressively more fanatic and sadistic as the story continues. Yet she is not entirely two-dimensional despite her obsession, for the reader is made privy to the twists of her eerie logic. It is likewise evident that, regardless of the harm she causes, she is not an evil person; more horribly, Madame Staubach is basically a good woman.

Though obviously a firm exponent of the Kueche, Kirche und Kinder view of women's nature, Madame Staubach does not apply its conservative philosophy to herself. The lodger had previously several times proposed marriage to her and had pointed out that she was in need--as a lone woman--of male guidance. Without disagreeing with this basic tenet, her response was to mention her two happy years of marriage and to allude to a heavenly bridegroom, presumably the late Herr Staubach; the interpretation, with Christ as the bridegroom, would seem too Catholic and nun-like for so fierce a Protestant. The lodger then gave up on Madame Staubach, who surprised him by suggesting he marry Linda instead of herself.

With Charlotte Staubach, Trollope appears to imply that religion may be turned into a perverse morbidity for a widow unable or unwilling to make an emotionally healthy

subsequent commitment to another man. Madame Staubach was in her twenties when she came, already a widow, to care for her niece; she is not so very old at the beginning of the story. The mantle of religion, as assumed by her, is a means to the exercise of power and to the gratification of an underlying vanity. Trollope earlier made similar observations about Mrs. Prime in Rachel Ray, but that character could do little harm, for she did not hold a mother's place and authority. Madame Staubach's extreme aggressiveness rings somewhat hollow, for it rests upon a sort of invincible ignorance. She has no other dimension, interest, or guidepost apart from her harsh, narrow religion upon which she might form judgments.

Not religious fanaticism, but a mania for worldly rank drives Josephine, Countess Lovel, the main character in Lady Anna (1871). Lady Lovel's past history has the melodramatic ring of a Gothic novel rather than the ordinary tone of a Trollope novel. Now forty-five, she had married at twenty-four--lovelessly and out of ambition--a disreputable earl twice her age known to be a libertine who routinely preyed upon women. Six months later he informed her that their wedding had been fraudulent because he had then a wife living in Italy who had since died; Lord Lovel invited her, for the time being, to continue to live with him as his mistress.

The upshot of this invitation was a duel fought by a relative on her behalf and by her having the earl prosecuted for bigamy. She had hoped to force the earl to defend himself and thus establish her own status and the legitimacy of their infant daughter. When Lord Lovel was acquitted, his wife resumed use of the title she had temporarily dropped. However, many people did not believe the trial had satisfactorily substantiated Lady Lovel's claims. Their doubts were reinforced by her close friendship with a simple tailor, Thomas Thwaite, in whose house she and her daughter lived. Thwaite supported Lady Lovel morally and financially through long years of legal skirmishes with her husband's lawyers. As the novel opens, Lady Lovel is about to triumph in a suit over the recently-deceased earl's will. Her substantial dower rights are to be confirmed and Lady Anna is to be established as sole heiress to her father's huge fortune and £20,000 a year income. More important, in the mother's eyes, is the fact that her successful lawsuit will settle, completely and beyond dispute, the question of the legal rights and social status of herself and Lady Anna.

Lady Lovel is almost ecstatic at the vindication of all she has so long fought for. Her happiness is intensified by suggestions from lawyers on both sides of the lawsuit that Lady Anna marry her distant cousin, the new earl. He is young, good-looking, pleasant, and very nearly penniless

due to the decision in Lady Lovel's favor. The marriage would neatly rectify this deficiency and would also solidify the social position of mother and daughter.

But Lady Lovel's victory is neutralized by a major problem with her daughter. Lady Anna cannot marry the earl because she is already secretly engaged to Daniel Thwaite, the tailor's son. The countess's rage against her formerly docile daughter can barely be contained. She vainly hopes to bully the girl into breaking with Thwaite and then marrying the earl. With this end in mind, the mother treats her daughter with a calculated brutality that falls just short of physical harm. Maternal affection is completely withdrawn and the girl is subjected to a constant barrage of denunciation and abuse; she is also sent to stay, almost as a prisoner, with virtual strangers. At one point Lady Lovel threatens to have Lady Anna adjudged delinquent by a magistrate, for she is not quite twenty-one.

Lady Lovel is a passionate character, but her main emotion is hate. The hatred she felt for her husband is transferred to the daughter as another, similar obstacle to the fulfillment of her obsession with blood, wealth, and rank. So unrestrained is her language and attitude that other characters become afraid of her, thinking she has gone mad. Lady Lovel considers killing herself, but rejects this as playing into her enemies' hands; she also ponders killing her daughter, but realizes she cannot bring

herself to do so. The widow resolves to kill Thwaite and does shoot him. He receives a superficial wound but decides not to report the incident. After this act Lady Lovel becomes frightened, knowing that she has gone too far. She offers no further resistance to the wedding but refuses to be present for the ceremony; she retires into rural solitude, completely estranged from the only person who means anything to her.

The reasons for Lady Lovel's strenuous objection to her daughter's marriage to Thwaite are more complex than the non-introspective character is aware. A strong self-righteousness and a native combativeness have combined to convince the countess that she will win out and always must win. A thread of masochistic enjoyment is faintly perceptible in the long struggle with her husband: what more could she ask than to be the victim of injustice, resolved to be an agent of moral vengeance or retribution? Lady Anna's refusal to complete the fulfillment of her mother's dreams not only destroys Lady Lovel's hope of social--as well as legal--rehabilitation, but is also in itself a glaring social error. The misalliance caused the novel to be received with contemporary disapproval; Trollope was apologetic about having an earl's daughter marry so far beneath her on the social scale.[8] The daughter's suitable marriage to the young earl would have permitted Lady Lovel to experience vicariously what she herself had never known.

The countess is aware that she is too unpolished and too worn down by adversity to re-enter society, but believes Lady Anna still young and unformed enough to take her proper social place with relative ease. Significantly, Lady Lovel has no understanding of her daughter, whom she appears to regard as little more than an extension of herself. The widow fails to comprehend that the considerations for which she married--the vaunted blood, wealth, and rank--the privileges which she never really attained, are not similarly important to her daughter. Nor does it cross the mother's mind that her idolized values may not be valid guides to anyone's happiness, whether her daughter's or her own. To Lady Anna blood, wealth, and rank are merely words. She is better acquainted with poverty, loneliness, and the humiliation of her title as a term of mockery on the tongues of other children. Lady Lovel also does not take into account the fact that the daughter has never had any friend other than Daniel Thwaite.

Lady Lovel, one of Trollope's most isolated widows, is cut off socially and emotionally from almost all human contact aside from her daughter and the Thwaites, father and son. Her entire emotional focus became concentrated on the vindication of her great grievance. While she tells herself that she does so only for her daughter's sake, this is manifestly not true. If there is any point to be taken about Lady Lovel's predicament, it may be the danger of placing

too much emotional importance upon the achievement of social ambitions, to the exclusion or atrophy of other, more human values. Although Lady Lovel is aggressive almost to the point of irrationality, nearly all her actions are responses to what she perceives as injuries or insults inflicted by men. Inherent in the character's rage is her limited effectuality. Even her major victory occurs twenty years after the injustice done her. Lady Lovel would appear to illustrate the disadvantages women contended with under the conservative view of women's nature and the resultant legal position that prevailed throughout much of the nineteenth century. Basically she was apparently unable to obtain legal redress to compel her wealthy husband to support herself and their child. A woman such as Lady Lovel could be used by liberals as an example of legal and social inequities that cried out for reform.

The two "bad" widowed mothers display a certain symmetry: one devoted to the spiritual, the other to the worldly. The two widows are similar in their cruelty toward each daughter, in their obliviousness to the child's welfare or wishes, in their perversion of conventional motherly solicitude and tenderness. Egocentricity and self-deception make the daughter important only as the instrument of the maternal will. Each widow is ready to sacrifice her daughter to her own compulsive, mistaken

values. Madame Staubach's religiosity lacks Christian charity; Lady Lovel's worldliness lacks sophistication. While Madame Staubach seems to come to a muddled perception of what she has done, it is doubtful whether lady Lovel learns anything more than that she has been defeated.

Conclusions. The widows of Trollope's Middle Period, Part Three are more fully characterized than any earlier widows. The central quality of each predecessor was her widowhood; all other facets of personality or situation seemed somehow subordinate to this fact. Less easily categorized third-stage widows are women of great vitality and individuality. They do not initially appear to be much constrained by their widowhood. Yet their freedom to maneuver turns out to be illusory, their widowhood an even crueler fact than previously. For these widows eventually find limits to their options and outlook which are imposed by their status. If the widows of 1864-71 have any common tie, it is (with the possible exception of Madame Staubach) that all demonstrate that a hunger for social ambition and wealth is an insufficient basis for a satisfying emotional and social life. All suffer considerable pain, much of which is self-inflicted as a result of imprudent choices. Except for Madame Staubach, the third-stage widows are social adventuresses who must manage their doubtful social status in the teeth of unfavorable public opinion. Of the

five widows, only Madame Max Goesler succeeds in attaining what she wishes; this is in part because she is clever enough to be flexible and modest in her goals.

While these widows are all aggressive, beneath their forcefulness lurks an essentially passive inability to influence effectually other characters or social forces. Involvement in society not only fails to alleviate their fundamental emotional isolation, but also subjects these widows to sometimes hostile surveillance and to further pressures.

The third-stage widows have some familial resemblance. Lady Ongar's and Lady Eustace's motives and situation are similar, but one is generous and honest while the other is a mean-spirited chronic liar. Where Madame Max is obviously clever, Lady Eustace only seems to be. Madame Staubach and Lady Lovel are obviously closely related; Lady Lovel is what Lady Ongar might have become under different circumstances. The emotional and social pressures on these widows, together with their inadequacy to deal satisfactorily with all demands, are depicted by Trollope with a clarity and completeness not hitherto seen. Widows at this highest point of Trollope's development of them have intense internal lives, the convolutions of which are usually fully visible, unlike those of earlier widows, whose thoughts tended to be less systematically laid bare.

Summary of Trollope's Middle Period (1859-71). First-stage Middle Period widows include Lady Desmond (Castle Richmond), Lady Lufton (Framley Parsonage), and Lady Mason (Orley Farm). What might be loosely termed the "Widows' Decade" begins with the initial use of widows as characters in themselves and not merely (as in the Early Period) as adjuncts to the young-love story. Lady Desmond and Lady Mason, conceived with some brilliance, are handled with uncertainty, for their extraordinary problems are not only sensational but also affronts to social decorum, about which their creator's nervousness is apparent. Only Lady Lufton, who exhibits facets both of the "good" and "bad" widowed mother, has problems firmly grounded in the context of conventional domesticity. First-stage widows are shown almost totally retired from society; their inner lives are only fitfully exposed; their problems are not so much brought to resolution as merely dropped for the convenience of ending the story. Of the three widows, Lady Mason alone is central to the entire novel.

Second-stage Middle Period widows are Mrs. Dale (The Small House at Allington), Mrs. Ray and Mrs. Prime (Rachel Ray), and Mrs. Greenow, Lady Macleod, and Mrs. Marsham (Can You Forgive Her?). These widows have less embarrassing emotional problems which are set within the confines of commonplace domesticity; their evident ancestress is Lady Lufton. The second stage is transitional and Trollope

here begins seriously to explore the widow in ordinary life. He abandons stylized young widows (found in the Early Period) and learns that the model "good" widowed mother cannot be developed past Mrs. Dale. Trollope shows an awareness, with Mrs. Ray, that widows who fall short of the ideal of motherhood are more promising for his purposes. With Mrs. Prime and Mrs. Greenow, he tentatively grasps the richer dramatic possibilities of young widows less angelic in temperament and motives, whose status is made more ambiguous through their possession of money. While less socially isolated than their predecessors, second-stage widows have progressed only to the fringes of society. The tenuous connection of Lady Macleod and Mrs. Marsham to the great social world of London partially foreshadows the milieu of subsequent widows. The inner lives of second-stage widows, while more completely detailed than those previously examined, are far from thoroughly revealed; the resolution of their problems is more smoothly carried out. But only one of the six widows, Mrs. Ray, is central to the novel.

Third-stage Middle Period widows include Lady Ongar (The Claverings), Madame Max Goesler (Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux), Madame Staubach (Linda Tressel), Lady Eustace (The Eustace Diamonds), and Lady Lovel (Lady Anna). These widows' closer involvement with London society and its values causes significant complication of their problems.

All have some element of the sensational about them. Yet Trollope's sophistication in tone and technique is evident. No longer nervous, he treats these widows in a matter-of-fact way; unlike his handling of the first-stage widows, he pays more attention to how a character is affected by a situation. He is not transfixed by the situation itself. If Madame Staubach and Lady Lovel differ from Lady Desmond and Lady Mason (characters to whom they bear much resemblance), it is because their sensational behavior is seen chiefly as the cause of domestic strife within a definitely conventional family context. Their behavior has wider impact, more apparent relevance, but less shock value than that of the first-stage widows.

The nuances of third-stage widows' inner lives are fully revealed. All five widows are central to the novel. One evident factor in the evolution of Trollope's artistry to this, its highest level of development, is his deepening sensitivity to pain. The further he explores widows, the deeper and more complex emotional and social distress he discovers. It is a sign of his achievement and his perception that his most adeptly characterized widows should suffer the most.

## Notes

[1]Houghton, pp. 384-85.

[2]"Little brown girls" is Trollope's own term (quoted by Sadleir, p. 384) for a standard type of heroine in his young-love stories who, while not beautiful, is instead sensible, unpretentious, and good-natured. Examples include Lucy Robarts in Framley Parsonage, Florence Burton in The Claverings, and Lucy Morris in The Eustace Diamonds.

[3]Sadleir, p. 391.

[4]Negative feeling about Jews was widespread. The first Jewish member of the House of Commons had been permitted to take his seat in 1858, only after years of strenuous religious and legal opposition. In Trollope's Rachel Ray (1863), a religiously conservative woman breaks her engagement partly because her fiance supports a Jewish candidate in the local contest for a seat in the Commons. The close friendship between the Prince of Wales and various Jewish millionaires in the 1870s and later was extremely distasteful to many.

[5]Quoted by Smalley, pp. 379-80, rev. of Phineas Redux, Spectator, 47 (3 January 1874), 15-17.

[6]Rebecca West, The Court and the Castle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 149-56.

[7]Quoted by Smalley, p. 376, rev. of The Eustace Diamonds, Saturday Review, 34 (16 November 1872), 637-38.

[8]Autobiography, p. 298; Sadeir, pp. 317-18.

# CHAPTER VI

## TROLLOPE'S WIDOWS: THE LATE PERIOD (1873-82)

Trollope wrote no fiction between 25 May 1871, when he completed Lady Anna, and 1 May 1873, when he began The Way We Live Now. The interim was occupied by travels in Australia and New Zealand and in writing Australia and New Zealand. A brief period of inactivity followed upon his return to London. After this two-year hiatus, widows become less important in late Trollope novels. Those that do appear represent no further evolution of the character type.

Widows of the Late Period differ from their immediate predecessors in four ways:

1--These widows are no longer the central characters nor are their concerns the main business of the novel.

2--The widows are retrogressive to the level of those much earlier.

3--These widows are relatively simple characters.

4--The widows tend to the pathetic or pitiful rather than anything approaching the tragic; none are comic.

Three widows will be examined in Chapter VI; they fall into the standard Trollope categories of "bad" widowed mother and young widow.

Non-development of the widow. Trollope's third-stage, Middle Period widows mostly operate against a background of London social pressures. In the Late Period this is partially true of only one widow; more evidently these widows appear to regress and function in an isolated village-type society. While just previously the development of the Trollopian widow had brought the character into confrontation with larger social values and their impact on personal problems, this process is now reversed. Late Period widows face problems not necessarily of their own making, nor entirely personal, but those caused by loved ones. There is a renewed focus on the family unit itself rather than upon the individual widow. The last Trollope widows show a tendency to revert to the same position as earlier widows, that is, as adjuncts to the young-love story.

The number of widows in the last novels is relatively few, perhaps fifteen widows in ten novels. (Trollope wrote fifteen novels within this time span, and began a sixteenth left unfinished at his death; he also wrote short stories and five non-fiction works.) Only two widows can be regarded as even approaching the level of supporting character, with one additional widow unimportant as a character but significant as the dead-end of development.

All the other widows in the Late Period are extremely minor; most exist to furnish a background for their more prominently displayed children.

The chief "bad" widowed mother of 1873-82, a baronet's widow, is squeezed emotionally and financially by an adored wastrel son and affronted by a decorous, unloved daughter. The second "bad" widowed mother is marginal, but shows the depths of maternal masochism and blind love despite mistreatment by a callous child. The sole young widow to be examined is a passionate American enamoured of a lumpish young Englishman.

The "bad" widowed mother. Matilda, Lady Carbury, a beautiful forty-three-year-old baronet's widow in The Way We Live Now (1873), represents one aspect of the all-pervading corruption in that novel. She is the first character encountered; she is seen writing cajoling, insincere letters to three newspaper editors in hopes of flattering them into favorable reviews for her newly-published potboiler, Criminal Queens, which she has cribbed from standard sources. Lady Carbury does not believe that any book gets praised on its own merit; she is desperately anxious for a good sale that a favorable review would assure because she partially supports herself and her two children as a hack-writer. This widow is an opportunist and adventuress whose principal activity seems to be efforts to manipulate others.

Lady Carbury has one central problem to which all her difficulties are related: her son. Sir Felix Carbury is twenty-five, strikingly handsome, and entirely worthless. Among his attributes he is a spendthrift, gambler, and drinker; he is likewise stupid, unloving, and a coward. More importantly, he is a parasite on his mother. Having wasted his own inheritance (he and his mother each had an income of £1,000 a year), he now lives off Lady Carbury. Ironically, the manipulative widow is wax in his hands. She dotes upon her son, is proud of his beauty and his title, and eagerly looks forward to his achieving some status or accomplishment in the world--if he doesn't ruin her first. For most of the novel Lady Carbury consciously suppresses her apprehensions about her son and refuses to admit what he is. Despite her devotion, or perhaps because of it, she receives insolence rather than affection from him. Unless he wants money from her--which she has always given, however much she protests--he avoids his mother although he lives in her house, eats food provided by her, and would be without a shilling in his pocket were it not for her. Lady Carbury can be sure of finding him only by going to his bedroom in the late morning, before he has risen. In their exchanges, she is always anxious and he always impertinent. Sir Felix has no occupation other than indulging his own pleasures, which center around his club. No one but his mother could believe him capable

of accomplishing anything worthwhile. Because she is convinced that a rich wife would satisfactorily establish him, and thereby make achievement possible, Lady Carbury stage-manages his reluctant courtship and acceptance by Marie Melmotte, daughter of the great swindler who is the novel's dominant figure. She even decides, when the girl's father rejects Sir Felix, that the couple must elope. But her son is too feeble to carry out the scheme. He loses at cards the money Miss Melmotte gives him to pay his expenses and gets drunk the night they are to run away. Subsequently the girl's father buys him off for £200 (Marie Melmotte has £100,000). After this Lady Carbury can no longer continue to deceive herself about her son. During much of the novel she will not permit anyone to criticize Sir Felix; eventually she painfully concedes the truth about him.

Although Lady Carbury lavishes much affection, thought, and money on her worthless son, she has little patience or love to spare for her twenty-one-year-old daughter, Hetta. Lady Carbury insists that her daughter marry a distant cousin, Roger Carbury, who as head of the senior branch of the family is owner of a small country estate. The mother's urgency to marry off her daughter to the eager cousin rests on both selfish and unselfish, emotional and practical reasons. She regards Hetta as more of a burden than Sir Felix, and as a tiresome duty that interferes with her absorption in her son.

The daughter finally grasps this when her attempts to be a moral support to the mother are brusquely rejected; Hetta becomes resentful at her mother's lack of sympathy or interest. Lady Carbury thinks her own social standing would be enhanced if her daughter were mistress of Carbury Manor, "Carbury of Carbury." In a less selfish and more practical sense, the mother is urgent to find a haven for the girl because she fears, in her more lucid moments, that the son will soon destroy her ability to keep a roof over their heads. When Hetta protests that she very much likes her cousin but does not love him, Lady Carbury retorts that love is a luxury to be indulged in only by rich people. At her least attractive, Lady Carbury bears a passing resemblance to another "bad" widowed mother, Jane Austen's Mrs. Ferrars.

Hetta becomes romantically involved with Paul Montague, yet another of Trollope's feckless young men, who almost seems vigorous and forceful in comparison with the languid and febrile Sir Felix. Lady Carbury is so constantly offensive about Montague that she and her daughter quarrel bitterly. Although the two are nominally reconciled at the novel's end, Hetta's resentment and Lady Carbury's hostility are still apparent.

Lady Carbury's treatment of her daughter, and of her son, shows her to be an ineffectual, bad mother. She is, however, following a double standard to which she subscribes and has taught her children: that every virtue is

expected of a woman and any vice forgiven of a man. It is implied that this philosophy is commonly accepted in society. Lady Carbury's conviction that this is true accounts for her tolerance (sometimes nearly pride) of her son's dissipation and her intolerance of her daughter's refusal to submit to her orders. Money and an appearance of respectability are Lady Carbury's slippery twin goals. She is virtually amoral, except sexually, and has few scruples about the means to her ends. Contriving two loveless marriages and toadying for editorial favors she sees as neither wrong nor demeaning in light of the worthwhile benefits these would bring about. Her constant calculation and her unflagging attempts to use other people are manifestations of her basic unscrupulousness. Her dishonesty is apparent when an editor with whom she is currying favor suddenly embraces and kisses her. She is surprised but unoffended; she thinks him tiresome and silly but then tries to figure how she can best make use of his foolishness. Nor has Lady Carbury any inkling of behavior or beliefs superior to her own. While visiting in the country she always goes to church because that is what one does in the country; in town she never attends church and probably (it is suggested) would not understand why other people do.

Lady Carbury might easily be contemptible had not Trollope, in his usual fashion, provided mitigating circumstances that offset her conduct. First, all that she does for and because of her son is essentially selfless.

She will hardly benefit if her schemes for him succeed, except by reflected glory. Her motives with regard to her daughter are less altruistic, but her wish to provide for the girl is genuine enough. A disinterested observer might also point out that Roger Carbury, the suitor favored by Lady Carbury, is in nearly every way more suitable than Paul Montague. Any harsh judgment of Lady Carbury must be tempered by the realization that her scheming and manipulation mostly come to naught. Her pursuit of the expedient, her busy dishonesty, is an exercise in futility.

The widow's life has been a constant and painful struggle in which she has known little happiness and no peace. As a child she was passed from hand to hand after her mother ran away from her father. As a penniless girl of eighteen she married lovelessly and out of economic necessity a professional army officer who was then forty-four years old. Her husband was an irascible man, extremely difficult to live with, who was not above striking her. Though always dutifully submissive and never unfaithful, she was at length so driven by his conduct as to leave him. They were reconciled after a year apart, but to some respectable (or malicious) persons she was tainted by the separation.

Beneath Matilda Carbury's stratagems and false social facade is an essential modesty that balances her less favorable facets. For herself she wants little more than

a house in a good part of town and to be involved in Literature (with a capital L). She is happy to have an "at-home" evening during which she receives mostly literary people. But her naivete is at once amusing and disarming, for she clearly has not the slightest understanding or feeling for literature. Moreover, her dream of Literature can envision nothing higher than writing a best-seller, while her efforts to manufacture a novel from nothing are comic high spots in a notably grim novel. Trollope obviously is making the same points, by means of Lady Carbury, as those in George Eliot's famous essay, "Silly Novels By Lady Novelists."[1] Lady Carbury invites book-reviewers and newspaper editors to her "salon" and is under the illusion that these are serious literary figures.

When the editor, Nicholas Broune, who earlier was "silly," suddenly proposes, she at first mistakes it for a proposition. Since she uses her femininity as a means to obtain favors from male editors, her error is not illogical. But the widow is even more staggered when she grasps that he wishes to marry her. She has thought little of him except as someone to be used to her advantage, but she has also thought little of herself and is genuinely amazed that any man, especially one so intelligent, should want her. After reflection she declines the offer for a variety of reasons. Her obsession with her son makes her fear that a husband might order her to have nothing to do

with Sir Felix, even though Broune has gamely expressed his willingness to face this problem. Conversely, she has compunctions about making anyone else responsible for her son. In addition she feels compelled to think what might be best personally for Mr. Broune himself. Not least important to Lady Carbury is her reluctance to give up her freedom in submission to another husband. When first widowed, three years previously, she had vowed she would not make another marriage of convenience.

Mr. Broune is rather relieved at being refused, but remains friends with Lady Carbury, gradually becoming her closest adviser and confidante. At the novel's end, he arranges that Sir Felix be sent to live, under supervision, as a remittance man in a small German city. After this Mr. Broune tells Lady Carbury that they will be married. By then she, who has never loved, has come to love and to depend upon him. The certain safety and peace that marriage to Mr. Broune will bring is a balm to Lady Carbury's many emotional bruises. As evidence of her intention to be a good wife and to lead a new life, she decides to be simply "Mrs. Broune" instead of retaining her title (which custom would have permitted).

While Lady Carbury finally finds emotional and financial shelter, her career in the novel is mostly a succession of defeats. Although the character has little self-awareness, she eventually is brought to the painful

recognition that all her efforts were meaningless and her schemes mere vanity. In addition she is forced to accept what her beloved son is and to acquiesce in permanent separation from him. Whether she ever realizes her responsibility for ruining his character through excessive indulgence is doubtful. Lady Carbury, however admirable her (wrong-headed) spirit under adversity, has been a bad widowed mother to both her children. The limitations of motherhood as the sole focus of a woman's life seem to be affirmed in Lady Carbury, who has little life of her own apart from her son.

Which view of women's nature is perceptible in Lady Carbury--the conservative, moderate, or liberal--is difficult to say. Her poor decisions after her widowhood would seem to support the conservative view of feminine inferiority; however, she had followed conservative precepts throughour her disastrous marriage. Proponents of the liberal outlook would surely suggest that her marriage was an economic necessity about which she apparently had little choice and that the marriage hardly conformed to the conservative image of the ideal marriage. Harriet Taylor Mill or Mary Wollstonecraft might notice how marriage caused Lady Carbury to turn to systematic double-dealing as the only way to cope with her husband and that this habit had a negative effect upon her character. Lady Carbury's views on marriage would, from her own experience, probably

be similar to John Stuart Mill's. Her second marriage, however, is in line with moderate opinion: Mr. Broune is wiser and more clear-sighted than she, but he is obviously prepared to respect her as a person.

Lady Carbury is one of Trollope's more striking widows because of her unusual circumstances; as a hack-writer she is the only lady in the novels, as far as I know, to earn money other than as a governess. Otherwise Lady Carbury is hardly so singular, for the character is a compendium of traits seen in previous widows. Lady Carbury's relationship with her daughter is more domesticated but similar to that of Madame Staubach and Lady Lovel to theirs. She is herself as calculating an adventuress as Madame Max Goesler, but less intelligent and successful. The raffish society in which she moves is reminiscent of that inhabited by Lady Eustace. Furthermore, Lady Carbury might be regarded as a middle-aged Lady Ongar, had the latter been less perceptive and self-aware. It is not at first apparent how regressive a widow Lady Carbury is. Until her appearance, major widows had increasingly been shown in situations that illuminated their interior lives. Family conflict was important only insofar as its repercussions were reflected within each widow; the widow herself was explored more thoroughly than her children or any other characters. But Lady Carbury represents a return to the widowed mother as an accessory to the young-love story. The sole meaning of

her life and the catalyst of her struggles is as the mother of Sir Felix; she has few concerns not tied directly or indirectly with this fact and virtually no independent life of her own.

Lady Carbury tends to fade as the novel progresses; after the beginning she is seen, at increasingly longer intervals, chiefly as a hand-wringer about her children's affairs--as an aid to Sir Felix's abortive engagement to Marie Melmotte and as an obstacle to Hetta's love for Paul Montague. Why Trollope should so reduce Lady Carbury can only be conjectured. One reason may be that her interests and those of her children comprise only a few strands in a huge novel packed with other characters and stories. Another reason may be that Lady Carbury is used symbolically (unusual in Trollope) to demonstrate, in a novel that depicts nearly universal social corruption, both the collapse of family standards and the venality of the literary demi-monde. If Lady Carbury has this symbolic value, she may be of less importance as an individual or as a widow.

The last "bad" widowed mother in the Trollope novels is the elderly Dowager Lady Brotherton in Is He Popenjoy? (1874-75). Lady Brotherton is a more marginal character than Lady Carbury but displays the maternal flaws of the latter carried to a logical extreme. Lady Brotherton,

however, never consciously accepts the truth about her own worthless son.

Lady Brotherton lives in the great family country house together with three unmarried daughters and her younger son and his wife; their financial circumstances are modest. Lord Brotherton, the middle-aged elder son, has lived in Italy for many years but suddenly sends word that he intends to occupy the house in seven months and that some preliminary renovations will be necessary. The family is to vacate the house as quickly as possible, and he orders his mother to take a house outside the neighborhood and not to retire to her dower house. Brotherton furthermore announces that he is to be married to an Italian lady.

Lady Brotherton is quite willing to do as her son demands, but her other children are outraged at the short notice, the insensitivity to the family's needs or wishes, and by the insolence of the messages. They are extremely indignant at being ordered to move the mother (and themselves) from the neighborhood. When the tenant at the dower house offers to move, her children take Lady Brotherton there. When Lord Brotherton arrives with his new wife, the couple are accompanied by a son about two years of age, which excites the family's interest in the date of the marriage and the child's possible illegitimacy.

Lady Brotherton sees nothing unreasonable or really objectionable in her son's peremptory commands, and she

is anxious to propitiate him. To her the fact that he is head of the family and a marquess are sufficient reasons that he be obeyed without question. That Brotherton is a boorish scoundrel who can scarcely utter a civil word about the members of his family is irrelevant to his worshipful mother. She hastens to abase herself before him; her masochism is obvious. Lady Brotherton is so nervously eager to please her son that she never objects to, and hardly appears to notice, the vicious things he invariably says about her other children. Indeed, she hastens to disassociate her own opinions from theirs and seems to fear that otherwise he will cast her off. So thoroughly does she identify with his wishes that she not only repeats his slanders but her other children come to regard her as his spy in their midst. At least once she warns him of their plans to have a lawyer investigate the legitimacy of the heir. After a time, her other children avoid discussing matters of importance in her presence, a reaction of which she is aware. While Lady Brotherton's doting fondness for her elder son is apparent, so too is his perfunctory tolerance of her. She is wild to see her grandchild, whom she quickly decides is legitimate, but the marquess uses her urgency to tantalize and manipulate her while only once gratifying her wish.

Lady Brotherton is not much more than a two-dimensional character with little interior life and with little

consciousness of her problems, which are apparent to the external observer--other characters, the narrator, the reader. To the children with whom she lives Lady Brotherton is a burden; their attitude toward her is one of patient resignation, as if dealing with a retarded child. That she is weak-minded and childish cannot be denied: her way of facing a domestic crisis is to take to her bed after indulging in a fit of hysterics. By the novel's close she has slipped, almost imperceptibly, into obvious senility.

What kind of mother Lady Brotherton has been in years past can only be guessed, for displays of maternal authority, even by those more strong-minded, are no longer feasible when the mother's youngest children are in their thirties. But it does seem apparent that this widow has always had less than common sense and can hardly ever have maintained the conventional role with regard to her children. Her oldest child, Lady Sarah Germain, occupies the position a mother might, dealing decisively with her sisters and brothers, and acting as mistress of the household. Lady Brotherton is tightly controlled by Lady Sarah, whom she fears. The Germain children show no respect for Lady Brotherton as a person, but they dutifully honor her because she is their mother. Her children demonstrate no affection for her nor does she for them. The marquess and his heir die shortly after Lady Brotherton becomes senile

but she is relatively unconcerned. Her devotion was to the holder of the title and to the heir--to positions--rather than to individual persons. Her attention is now turned to the immediate prospect of a soon-to-be-born baby heir and to the new marquess. One critic regards her "vagaries" as "Trollope's judgment on the dangers of respect for rank as a corrupter of intellect and morals."[2] I think this is overstated, for her weak-mindedness preceded rather than followed her veneration of rank; in addition, though Lady Brotherton is herself a marchioness, she seems to place little value in her own status.

The final "bad" widowed mother is too feeble and slight to be of much interest in her own right, for she is little more than a plot device, another small complication in the young-love story (here that of Mary Lovelace and Lord George Germain, who learn to know and love each other only after their marriage). Lady Brotherton unfolds no new advance; she is heavier and less attractive than the first "bad" widowed mother, Mrs. Ray (Rachel Ray, 1863), who also was not so much "bad" as incompetent. Discernible in Lady Brotherton is Lady Carbury's attitude toward her son, carried a few degrading steps further, and also Lady Lovel's exaltation of rank.

The young widow. The last noteworthy young widow in the Trollope novels is Mrs. Winifred Hurtle in The Way We Live Now (1873). She is an exceptionally beautiful and clever

woman in her early thirties, whose re-marriage would not ordinarily seem to present any problems. But Mrs. Hurtle is not an ordinary woman. She is peculiarly exotic, a rara avis in Trollope: an American divorcée of mysterious and, possibly, violent background. Her former husband is believed dead, so that the scandal of having been divorced is partially subsumed by the protective respectability of widowhood. The passionate Mrs. Hurtle is clearly out of place in the gentility of England.

Mrs. Hurtle has an external social problem, that elusive and dubious past (she is known to have shot a man through the head in Oregon and is suspected by some of complicity in her husband's death). Her internal emotional problem, closely allied, is her repudiation by the man to whom she was engaged and the reasons why she is so attracted to him. The man she loves is Paul Montague, the spineless young man who now is enamoured of Hetta Carbury. Why Mrs. Hurtle should so love an idle and aimless man some years younger than herself is not immediately clear, nor is the eventual explanation entirely convincing. It has been suggested that Mrs. Hurtle has been Montague's mistress,[3] though I wonder whether Trollope would in that case have presented her as so attractive and fundamentally worthy a character. Mrs. Hurtle is surely the most original and interesting female character in the novel.[4]

Montague became engaged to Mrs. Hurtle while in the United States and, when he later sends a letter ending their engagement, she comes to England in an attempt to re-capture him. He is flattered by her attentions and, simultaneously, frightened of her. For her caressing manner alternates with a menacing toughness, an implied potential for violence that seems barely held under constraint. Montague feels less threatened by the more conventional, if colorless, maidenly attributes of Lady Carbury's daughter. He was argued out of his infatuation with Mrs. Hurtle by his good friend Roger Carbury, who seems to see no dishonor in breaking an engagement which is, elsewhere in Trollope, a heinous act.

Montague had become increasingly nervous about the few details of Mrs. Hurtle's past life that he had been able to glean. Very little of her past seems verifiable except by her own assertion and she has released few details. According to Mrs. Hurtle her husband was a drunkard and scoundrel, and she had divorced him in Kansas. She says that he later died in a remote part of Texas, but there is no death certificate or other proof to allay Montague's fears. She is a wealthy widow, but the sources of her income are never revealed. When Montague had first known her she was in temporarily straitened (but unexplained) circumstances. Mrs. Hurtle merely tells her erstwhile fiancé, rather grimly, that she had been cheated out of

her money but that she had successfully reclaimed that which was hers.

What Montague represents to Mrs. Hurtle is made apparent late in the story. Her life has been a rough, wearying struggle and she is aware of its effects on her personality; the mild orderliness, the civilized qualities of England and the English, as personified in Montague, are a restful balm to her bruised spirit. However, the widow seems to embody a sense of the lawlessness and vigor of the American West which appears to dismay the staid English characters who regard her with disapproval and amazement. Trollope's own attitude is ambivalent: while he clearly admires her spirit and honesty, he is repelled by her departures from the decorum expected of English ladies and by the crudity of the society from which she comes. Walter Allen believes that Trollope is frightened by the freedom of action she arrogates to herself.[5]

Among so many feeble-spirited characters in The Way We Live Now, Mrs. Hurtle's vitality and animal energy are particularly appealing. Yet these qualities are suspect. When she tells Montague that she killed the man in Oregon to save herself from rape, his response is neither sympathetic nor admiring. Instead, he is horrified and believes no man would want to marry such a woman. No reader can doubt, with regard to Mrs. Hurtle and Montague, that she is the better man of the two.

Although Mrs. Hurtle is very aggressive, she is able to manipulate Paul Montague only so far. While she can summon him regularly and alternately dazzle and intimidate him, she is unable to get him to resume the engagement. She becomes increasingly aware of what a poor creature he is--she is even able to make him cry--and of her own superiority. In her mind he eventually becomes "the Englishman she had condescended to love."[6] At the novel's end it is reported from San Francisco that Mr. Hurtle has turned up, very much alive, and has denied that there ever was a divorce. Mrs. Hurtle leaves for the United States to fight this newest problem. Thus all Montague's doubts are vindicated and his guilt about her dissipated.

Mrs. Hurtle is an affront to the conservative view of women's nature, and scarcely less so to the moderate outlook. She is clearly a liberated woman who controls her own fortune, thinks and speaks for herself, is subject to no man, and who is obviously competent to lead her own life. Trollope goes so far as to suggest that she would be a good comrade.[7] She is the possessor of many virtues usually classed as masculine and is provided with none of the qualities of a submissive, docile wife. The man she woos, however, has the customary feminine attributes. The reversal of roles implicit in the relationship between Mrs. Hurtle and Montague would probably be thought unnatural and threatening to the order of things. Mrs. Hurtle tells

Montague that he is able to behave unfairly to her because society does not permit women to fight back against male mistreatment. Advocates of the liberal opinion might find so plain-spoken a woman an embarrassment to their cause or, perhaps, protest Trollope's bias in burdening her with so unfavorable a past and so unflattering a nationality. Trollope provides Mrs. Hurtle with a yearning that reflects his own convictions, but which could hardly be operational given the circumstances: she seems to desire a complementary marriage, such as was envisioned by proponents of the moderate view of women's nature. Yet this could work only if Paul Montague assumed the standard female position of the inferior partner and Mrs. Hurtle were to take charge (in a kindly and encouraging way), as the husband was supposed to do.

The originality of the character fails to conceal the familiarity of Mrs. Hurtle's situation, which has been seen earlier in Trollope's work. The widow, for so she regards herself until the news from San Francisco, and her lover are very similar to Lady Ongar and Harry Clavering in The Claverings (1864). Unlike Julia Ongar, however, the widow here is a relatively minor character whose concerns are tangential in a story crowded with characters; Mrs. Hurtle does not even appear until Chapter 26. Her isolation, moreover, virtually duplicates that of many earlier widows; she is shown living almost

entirely secluded in London lodgings where she spends most of her time simply waiting for Paul Montague to come. She does nothing unconventional and little that is even positive within the action of the novel. The lurid tales of her past are from a prior time.

Mrs. Hurtle does not function in the novel in her own interest, but as a plot device. However dramatically promising her problems, Trollope does not systematically explore these; eventually Mrs. Hurtle and her difficulties become another set of aberrations in a novel filled with moral deviations. The widow is perfunctorily dismissed so that Trollope may resolve the insipid courtship plot; a parallel concern moved him much earlier with Lady Desmond (Castle Richmond, 1859-60), Lady Lufton (Framley Parsonage, 1859-60), and Mrs. Dale (The Small House at Allington, 1862-63). The most Trollope seems willing to allow Mrs. Hurtle is to cherish a hopeless, unrequited love which, here and elsewhere, he finds romantic and admirable. She dwindles functionally into a mere obstacle to Paul Montague's love for Hetta Carbury.

Conclusions. Until the Late Period, each successive group of Trollope widows demonstrated a progressively more sophisticated examination of the social and emotional dilemmas confronting widows. That Trollope has halted his exploration of the character type and abandoned its dramatic

potential may not be immediately apparent, for Lady Carbury and Mrs. Hurtle are provided with divertingly novel circumstances, the one as authoress, the other as a sort of Annie Oakley. But the functional position of these widows, as well as of Lady Brotherton, in the novels reveals the shift in the author's attention, for none is more central than as a plot fixture or complication. Their problems remain sidelights to other, more fully emphasized situations. These widows are not created as individual characters whose own interests are developed as the chief story in the novel; instead, they are depicted as living for, and dependent on, other characters.

Trollope reverts, with these last three widows, to a level of observation no greater, at best, than that of the Middle Period, Part One (1859-61), when the stylized courtship plot and the family unit were more important to him than individual widows. Lady Carbury, Mrs. Hurtle, and Lady Brotherton are the most prominent and interesting widows in Trollope's Late Period; the few other widows that do appear are mostly conventional "good" widowed mothers of the kind the novelist abandoned long before, and whose characterization is minimal.

## Notes

[1]George Eliot, "Silly Novels By Lady Novelists," Westminster Review, 66 (October, 1856), 442-61; rpt. in Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 300-24.

[2]Cockshut, p. 47.

[3]Pope Hennessy, p. 333.

[4]Mrs. Hurtle is seen as a "new psychological construction" by the anonymous reviewer in the Examiner, 28 August 1875, pp. 384-85; the notice is reprinted in Anthony Trollope: The Critical Heritage, ed. Donald Smalley, pp. 410-12.

[5]Allen, p. 315.

[6]The Way We Live Now (London: Panther Books, 1969), p. 751.

[7]The Way We Live Now, p. 402.

# CONCLUSION

## I

A widely-accepted critical commonplace during the latter part of Trollope's life--and for many years after--held that Trollope was no more than a mirror of his time, merely a photographer of society. No compliment was intended, for this assessment implied a mechanical and passive function entirely devoid of art or intelligence. Trollope was regarded as a bore: he depicted the mores of the middle class accurately enough,[1] but who could be interested in the lives of such resolutely ordinary people? The most that could be conceded to Trollope (it was thought) was that his work might have value to future historians of the period. When Trollope's reputation was at its lowest, about a dozen years after his death, Frederic Harrison agreed that Trollope would be historically important but believed that this realism was achieved by Trollope's artistry.

> The ten or twelve of Trollope's best will continue to be read, and will, in a future generation, no doubt, regain not a little of their early vogue. This will be due, in part, to their own inherent merit as graceful, truthful, subtle observation of contemporary types, clothed in a style of transparent ease. Partly, it will be due to this: that

> these tales will reproduce for the future certain phases of life in the nineteenth century with minute fidelity and the most literal realism.[2]

The degree of that fidelity is shown by the time setting of Trollope's novels and by his intense interest in detail. Other Victorian writers often set their novels in the past; with a very few exceptions, Trollope's are contemporary. A woman who knew Trollope during his long residence in Ireland remarked that "his close looking into the commonest objects of daily life always reminded her of a woman in a shop examining the materials for a new dress."[3]

The truth of those earlier predictions has been affirmed, from a sociological viewpoint, by Margaret Hewitt, who regards Trollope's work as an accurate source of information "for historically minded sociologists" about the changing roles of English women during his time.[4] For Trollope shows that, in a society which glorifies marriage, a woman who has lost her husband also loses the social status and protection a husband had conferred on her. All Trollope widows except (perhaps) the earliest exist in social isolation perceptible to themselves and to all the other characters. Moreover, the widows suffer profound emotional detachment. Their society has insisted that the only proper female role is that of wife, but the husband's death has left them essentially without function. Some widowed mothers attempt to remain emotionally and socially viable by exerting maternal authority over grown children

but this is usually seen as wrong-headed and futile. A sense of uselessness afflicts most Trollope widows. The universality and durability of the problems observed by Trollope are shown in Helena Lopata's recent pioneer sociological study of American widows. She records similar social difficulties and also suggests the emotional dislocations of widowhood.

Trollope finds in his more closely-examined widows some degree of obsession that causes them to pursue unreasonable goals or to develop morbid attitudes. Furthermore, for many widows, their gentility is haunted by relative poverty. But even when widows have money, there is only the pressure of additional difficulties. Foremost are the parasites, chiefly male, who are interested in the widow only for her assets. On one level, moneyed widows doubt their ability to handle their fortunes--a reflection on their lack of practical experience. A larger philosophic question also disturbs them: what is the long-range personal usefulness of their money? Widows were limited in using money for their own purposes, since meaningful occupation which might engage their interest and energy was denied to them by social custom. Nor would extensive travel be thinkable without male escort.

However, her money seems to be the only reason why a Trollope widow can have any reasonable prospect of remarriage; if she has no money, the widow can apparently

expect no husband. Few widows ever seem even to think of marrying again. Given their ages, usually no more than the early forties, this is remarkable, particularly since becoming a wife would offer the opportunity of becoming socially and emotionally functional again. Their lack of interest in re-marriage may spring from personal and social reasons. Some widows have had a troublesome marriage; now relieved of its burden, they may hesitate to surrender their personal independence to another husband. This assumes greater significance in that a number of widows had made marriages of convenience dictated by financial exigency. It is also possible (perhaps) that re-marriage violated some tacit taboo, that marrying again was thought to dishonor the first husband's memory.[5] Trollope shows only three second marriages based on mutual affection; the few other re-marriages provide poetic justice for errant widows.

The critical consensus that Trollope faithfully rendered contemporary life has ironic relevance to his study of widows, for his views on women are ambiguous and inconsistent. The problems Trollope shows run directly counter to his own beliefs. He was firmly convinced that marriage was the only proper career for a woman, yet his novels frequently contain female characters, such as widows, for whom this is impossible. Trollope seems unaware of the incongruity. In Is He Popenjoy? (1874-75), for instance, he attacks the organized women's rights movement and depicts

its female adherents as power-hungry and un-feminine eccentrics; the same novel shows a marriage of convenience arranged by a socially ambitious father for an immature daughter who feels unable to resist. He Knew He Was Right (1867-68) contains what is almost a case study of women's wrongs: a wife legally helpless to prevent her estranged, mentally-disturbed husband from removing their child from her care. While Trollope shows such problems, he draws no general conclusions nor suggests solutions. Women who have undefined longings to be something more than a wife, such as Caroline Waddington in The Bertrams (1858) and Alice Vavasor in Can You Forgive Her? (1863-64) are shown as mistaken and over-proud.

Although Trollope disapproves of mercenary marriages and provides bitter examples, he presents no other economic alternative for the many poor girls that populate his novels; virtually all make providential marriages of affection, thereby releasing their creator from the dilemma. The possibility of such girls holding jobs never occurs to him. The rare woman trying to earn money (Lady Carbury) is seen as incompetent and un-ladylike. But Trollope cannot be so easily pinned down. His last, unfinished novel, The Land-Leaguers (1882), contains the portrait of Rachel O'Mahony, a gifted opera singer who loves another typically vacuous young man. She does not, however, give up her prosperous career until (providentially) she loses her voice. Trollope

looks upon her talent, ambition, and earning ability with respect and sympathy. Yet he doggedly insists marriage is better for her; he regards her as too nice a girl to be soiled in the tawdry working world.

Trollope's lecture, "Higher Education of Women" (first printed about 1868), repeats the same ideas. It is an unintentionally comic example of Trollope's ambiguity about women. Women are too idle and he is firmly for higher education: it is a Good Thing. Yet he never explains what he means by "higher education," its content, or what it is supposed to accomplish. He spends most of the lecture praising women's place in the home and denying that higher education would lead to the triumph of the women's rights movement. The lecture is typical of Trollope, who described himself as an "advanced conservative liberal." His dislike of the women's movement is clearly connected with his distrust of social ideology as heartless and inhuman, forcing people to conform to abstract pre-conceptions. That his own beliefs about women and marriage could also be construed as ideology would, no doubt, have horrified him. Trollope's inconsistencies only reflect those of his time and it is probably unfair to judge him by later standards.

Despite his own conscious views about women, Trollope constantly creates female characters that do not fit the essential optimism or idealism of his conventional beliefs.

This is apparent in his widows, and spinsters, and in young women still single after several seasons in the marriage market. His ideas on women's place notwithstanding, it is clear--as it is not always the case with other male Victorian novelists--that Trollope likes women. They never appear in his fiction as angelic ninnies or as wicked man-traps. While often slightly gallant about women, he is rarely sentimental and never patronizing. Women are shown in Trollope through a full range from high intelligence and capability to abysmal stupidity--just as are his men.

II

Whatever social insight or validity may be displayed in Trollope's widows, they are not merely sociological case studies but are examples of the novelist's art. While Trollope doubtless knew widows in real life, the sufferings his fictional widows endure are not commonly enacted before interested observers. Trollope's imaginative powers are sometimes overlooked when the authenticity of his detail is praised. It was commonly assumed when The Warden and Barchester Towers appeared that Trollope had considerable acquaintance among the clergy. However, at the time, he did not.[6]

Trollope's widows are consistent with his penchant for "character 'in position,'"[7] that is, mature characters who have been fully formed by experience. Trollopian maidens, however charming, are to a certain extent pre-fabricated.

Not only are they unfledged but they are disposed, by the romantic requirements of the novel and by their creator's beliefs, to follow a nearly unvarying pattern. Social and fictional conventions also dictate somewhat stylized handling of wives. Good wives are seen (and applauded) as supportive of their husbands, happily absorbed in their families, and as basically selfless. Bad wives are shown (and condemned) as willful and headstrong, making selfish demands, and wholly outside their husbands' control. Trollope's art is liberated in his portrayal of widows, for a widow did not call forth the same ready responses: hers was an anomalous position. The social expectations proper to maiden and to wife did not apply to her. Because widows were outside the conventional pieties, Trollope could deal with them without controverting his own or his readers' beliefs. Since a widow was at least nominally independent of male control, she presented Trollope with the opportunity of depicting the unusual picture of a mature woman living alone.

Trollope's interest in widows is especially apparent after 1858. Three novels in succession were written (1859-61), each of which contained a notable widow. Three more novels quickly followed (1862-64) with six additional significant widows. Still later (1864-71), six other novels had a widow either as the central character or as the most important female character. No other major

nineteenth-century English novelist made such fictional capital out of widows. Jane Austen has a surprising number of widows in her novels, but she does not study widowhood.

Trollope's earliest widows are treated superficially, as little more than furniture in the novel. For the most part, the widows of 1847-58 are either "good" widowed mothers who live only for their children or young widows who play comic parts in the courtship plot. One widow does not fit this pattern of benevolence but is not taken seriously. The next group of widows (1859-61) marks Trollope's first realization of the dramatic possibilities of a widow's situation. The emotional and social deprivations which are part of a widow's experience are here seriously, if unsystematically, touched upon. But the situations in which these widows find themselves are so unusual that the relevance of their problems to those of other widows is not apparent. The widows that follow (1862-64) are Trollope's first in-depth examination of those living in ordinary circumstances, whose problems, if less grandiose, are more nearly universal. The novelist makes three discoveries at this point: that "good" widowed mothers are too limited for fictional purposes by stereotyped conventions, that "bad" widowed mothers provide better dramatic potential, and that possession of money may change a widow's lot. In Trollope's most sophisticated characterizations of widows (1864-71), he shows that young widows with money

find it an additional trouble and that "bad" widowed mothers struggle with refractory children. At this stage he unites in his widows the emotional aberrations of his first, sensational widows and the social isolation of their immediate successors. Trollope's last widows (1873-82) simply reiterate his previous discoveries.

Serious Trollopian widows, those after 1858, are shown in social isolation that changes qualitatively from virtual seclusion in the home to apartness from village society to detachment in the midst of high-society London. Their emotional problems often stem from an incorrect decision in a specific situation. This ethical dilemma is, at least with some earlier widows, a fairly simple one which a correct "yes" or "no" might resolve. But Trollope quickly moves to more complex situations in which conscious choice is not so apparent or applicable, where the response may be determined by personal bias or character defects. Trollope shows widows as afflicted with varying degrees of obsession, which further complicate their problems; some widows are prey to several obsessions. Their unconscious choices are often directed by their obsessions. Many widows seem to need power and attempt to dominate their domestic situation. Devotion to their children or (more rarely) to a man drives some widows. Others are fixated on rank, material things, and (less frequently) religion. The faintest touch of incipient hysteria is perceptible in many widows.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most Trollope widows are, in some sense, overtly aggressive in ways disapproved by their society. Very few are completely passive. Trollope recounts one unusual form of aggression: at least four young widows play a masculine role in actively wooing passive and shy men. Most widowed mothers, whether "good" or "bad," are shown to possess attitudes contrary to contemporary standards: nearly all find their children burdensome and many are alienated from them.

After 1858, most widows are serious characters. The several comic widows still have meaningful problems and Trollope uses ironic comedy to point out some aspects of their self-delusion. Few widows are introspective, few fully comprehend themselves and their situations. Many, however, are shown with the workings of their interior lives revealed. The most impressive widows are those whose minds are most fully exposed and Trollope becomes progressively more adept at such exposure.

Trollope's widows retain their individuality despite the similarity of their circumstances. They share, however, a common fate. With a single exception, all are defeated by their widowhood and by their sex. Trollope proves that the freedom of a mature woman living independent of male control is only an illusion, for she has no function in society. Neither motherhood nor money alters this fact.

Trollope's study of widows substantiates a perceptive critical judgment.

> His novels are almost without exception novels of conflict between individual decencies and social disingenuities. This is because he regarded private persons with a friendly optimism but society with cynical mistrust.[8]

## Notes

[1]Trollope's aristocrats also are authentic, according to Lord David Cecil (p. 231).

[2]Harrison, p. 183.

[3]Pope Hennessy quotes this (p. 80) without attribution to its source, Escott's memoir.

[4]Margaret Hewitt, "Anthony Trollope: Historian and Sociologist," The British Journal of Sociology, 14, No.3 (September, 1963), 226-39.

[5]Cf. Thomas Hardy's The Hand of Ethelberta (1876). In that novel Sol Chickerel, a carpenter, tells his sister, who has just been married for the second time and to a viscount: "a good woman never marries twice." (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 424.

[6]Autobiography, p. 80.

[7]Richard Holt Hutton's term, quoted in Skilton, pp. 120-21.

[8]Sadleir, p. 153.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Dorrance Kennedy was born in 1936 in Philadelphia, the youngest of the three children of Leo and Ada Dunbar Kennedy. He was educated in parochial schools in Pennsylvania, California, and New Jersey; he graduated from Camden Catholic High School, Camden, New Jersey. He received his bachelor's degree from Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania, in 1958 and his master's degree from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1962.

He was an editor at Chilton Company, publishers, in Philadelphia from 1961 to 1963. From 1964 until 1967 he was a member of the English faculty at St. Anselm's College, Manchester, New Hampshire. He entered the doctoral program at the University of Florida in 1967.

Since 1971 Kennedy has been as associate professor of English at Indian River Community College, Fort Pierce, Florida. He resides with his wife, the former Ann VanDyke Grace, in Vero Beach, Florida.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ward Hellstrom
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John J. Allen
Professor of Romance Languages

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Motley F. Deakin
Associate Professor of English

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August, 1975.

Dean, Graduate School

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
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